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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["I WISH TO KNOW EVERYTHING, NO MATTER WHAT, AS LONG AS I DO KNOW."]

SWEETHEART AND TRUE.

CHAPTER XV.

"Oh, treacherous night! Thou lead'st thy ready veil to every treason. And teeming mischiefs thrive beneath thy shade!"

The brother and sister sat silently for a full two minutes or more after Olive had closed the heavy door behind her, and ran lightly up the broad oaken staircase.

It may have been that they were waiting to make sure that she would not return on some trivial errand, perhaps, and so disturb their privacy of discussion; but they need not have feared, for Olive was only too pleased to get away so easily, and nothing would have brought her back on any consideration whatever.

Then Miss Daunt rose from her chair, went to the door, opened it, and went outside into the dark corridor, which led to the other portion of the water-mill, shut away from her domain by another heavy oaken door. She listened a moment, and then returned into the room.

"We shall not be disturbed now, Stephen," she said. "Nannette and her husband have gone to bed. There is no likelihood of their coming to pry—not that I have ever found them obtrusively curious, I must say. Still, it is as well to make sure of uninterrupted. Now, what have you to tell me?"

The man rose to his feet, and paced the long, low room twice; then he paused near his sister's chair.

"I have a great deal to tell you, Rebecca," he answered, slowly.

"Good or ill?" she inquired, briefly.

"Not good, certainly," he emphasised, leaning one hand on the back of Miss Daunt's chair.

"In what way not good, Stephen?" the woman inquired again, looking round at him.

"Well, events thicken. There must be an end to it."

"Ah! I thought it would soon be time for that," she returned, grimly.

"Yes! we must hasten matters a little, Rebecca. The horizon is not clear. There is a cloud ahead of us, bigger than a man's hand

already, for it is a woman's whole body that may darken our sky," he said, with a frown.

"What do you mean by a woman's whole body?" asked Miss Daunt, quickly.

"I mean that *she* has escaped," the man responded, still knitting his heavy brows together.

"Escaped!" echoed Miss Rebecca, imitating her brother's dark frown on her own forehead, which was so like his that no one could mistake their kindredship when they looked on one face and then on the other.

"Yes; it's an infernal trouble, but it's a fact, nevertheless," he rejoined, pacing the room again.

"How could she have escaped?" Miss Daunt went on, following him with her eyes, which looked harder and more steely, with the candle glare shining in them, than usual. "I thought she was so secure where she was that such a thing as her escaping would have been quite impossible."

"I thought so too; you see we were both wrong in our conjectures, Rebecca," he remarked, with an effort in the direction of light satire.



"So it seems. At the same time it appears to me that there must have been a most blamable laxness in the establishment to allow of such a thing as an escape being at all possible. Why, one of the chief reasons for your placing her with Dr. Brouste was the knowledge of the immense supervision which he exercised over his patients," argued his sister again.

"I know it was; but she was always a cunning wretch at her best," he returned, grimly, frowning once more. "I suppose she set her wits to work, and managed to hoodwink them all somehow or other."

"Very likely. She was cunning, as you say. When did you hear she had escaped?"

"Only yesterday at noon. I received a telegram from Dr. Brouste, informing me of the fact. Here it is, read what he says."

Stephen Daunt took a yellow envelope from his breast-pocket, and threw it down on the table in front of Miss Rebecca.

She took it up, opened and spread it out before her. It was only a few lines of briefest import, written in French, and put in an as ambiguous a manner as possible, that it might tell no tales to a casual observer.

It ran thus:—

"Madame has gone. What do you advise? Answer by return."

Miss Daunt read the few words, folded the telegram, placed it again in its envelope, and gave it back to him. Stephen took it from her, and returned it to his inner breast-pocket.

"Of course, directly I received this extremely pleasant news, I started off at once by the night mail to see Dr. Brouste on the matter. I had a long consultation with him at his Maison de Sante this morning, after which I came on here, which is the reason of my appearance a day sooner than was anticipated."

"What did Dr. Brouste say when you saw him, Stephen?" inquired Miss Rebecca, the next moment.

"He simply said he regretted the circumstances immensely, but that he really could not lay any blame whatever upon either himself or his assistants, for Madame had been more than ordinarily acute, and had managed with marvellous dexterity, quite unforeseen in his experience, to elude them all, and get beyond the walls of the establishment, which, as you can see for yourself, mountains, are high and strong and impassable," to quote his own words on the subject."

"How could she have got out, I wonder?" pondered the sister, with visible disturbance of mind.

"That is what Dr. Brouste cannot comprehend. He declares that he has always exercised the greatest vigilance over her in accordance with my desire, and for which he received extra payment each year," answered the man, with an attempt at a grim smile, in remembering the Doctor's keenness at the time of bargaining.

"I wonder she could get away unnoticed. I am sure Lichy is such a bleak, dreary and uninteresting place, that the slightest thing would attract remark."

"I tell you she is a cunning fiend," Stephen said, impatiently. "It is no good wondering how she got away, or why no one happened to see her. She has got away, clean away, and no one saw her."

"Is there no trace whatever of her? Surely Dr. Brouste made some search for her round and about the premises immediately he discovered her escape."

"He says he has had within a radius of ten miles round Lichy scoured to find her, with no result; and he also says that what more is to be done must be undertaken by myself."

"Something must be done, Stephen, that is very clear," said Miss Daunt; "it would never do to allow her to remain at large. You don't know what mischief she might not do in her present frame of mind, insane though she is."

"Yes, she must be found, to prevent mischief," he reflected, darkly; "when I do find her she shall be consigned to a stronghold where there will be no chance of her escaping."

"Will you not place her with Dr. Brouste again, then?" queried Miss Rebecca.

"No, not with Dr. Brouste any more. In fact, the doctor told me candidly that if she was found he was not at all sure that he could receive her back into his establishment."

"But why, Stephen? What reason did he give you for such a decision?"

"A very excellent reason, so far as the legality of it goes. He put the case to me in a completely new light."

"In what way?"

"He said that he considered it due to me to hear that Madame's insanity was passing away from her."

"Stephen!" put in Miss Daunt, quickly, in a voice almost of alarm.

"Yes, Rebecca, he said that. If you remember, he told me at the first that in his opinion it was by no means a hopeless case. I conclude he thought he was imparting a most joyful fact to me then. Whether he has altered his conclusion on that head in his own mind since then does not concern me in the very least. It is a matter of perfect indifference to me."

"Do you really mean to say that Dr. Brouste thought she was becoming sane again?" asked Miss Daunt, incredulously.

"He most certainly said so, at any rate," with sardonic intonation of voice.

"But how did he put it to you, Stephen?"

"Well, he said that for some time past he had begun to notice a gradual alteration in her manner and expression of face. Expansiveness told him that this marked some change in the disease, and probably reason was beginning to assert her sway over the mind. The doctor put it very teachingly, I assure you. Perhaps he expected me to shed rapturous tears on hearing it; I fear I disappointed him sadly, if that was the case."

"And was that all he said about it?"

"No; he was quite disposed to discuss at great length on the subject, which no doubt to him was a most interesting one. He further informed me that during the last month his idea grew into a solid conviction, that Madame's restoration to health and reason was only the work of time, and of a short time, too, he impressed upon me. I conclude he considers her escape from his Maison de Sante a crowning piece of evidence in favour of his theory upon her restored sanity. Poor wretch! She was insane enough when she went in."

"Yes," reflected Miss Daunt in answer; "it is true she was mad then, but sane enough to know she was being consigned to a private madhouse; and, in consequence, threatened us with a future revenge. We have everything to dread from her by her being loose on society like that. It is a hazardous thing, Stephen, most hazardous for us."

"I know it is, and she must be found as soon as possible."

"Where will she go, do you think?"

"To England!" he answered, slowly. "She will, I am certain, make her way to England to look for me, but she will not find me where she thinks, because I shall be here."

"Yes," said Miss Rebecca, attentively; "and then what do you think she will do?"

"Nothing; 'it will not be in her power. I have set a detective on the watch for her already. If she goes where I believe she will inevitably go to find me, she will be duly caught. The bird will be snared before it can do any mischief."

"And then?" asked the grim woman, after a short pause.

"I have not thought of that yet; that is still to come. In the meantime I shall remain here—for a week, at any rate, if not longer. Events must be hurried on, Rebecca."

There is no more time to be lost now," he added, with significance.

"Yes, Stephen, you are right, events must be hurried a little."

"Everything must be settled to make all secure, otherwise we shall have worked in vain. Have you said anything to the girl yet?"

"Yes; I have opened her mind to the idea," she answered, slowly.

"And how did she take it?" pacing down the polished floor with even steps.

"Not so well as one could desire."

"But she must be made to take it well, then. No compulsion, only you must, is the motto for the occasion. If coaxing fails, then we must try other means."

"She has a strong will, Stephen," put in the gaunt woman, quietly.

"So have we strong wills, Rebecca; stronger than hers. She will have to submit. But I do not contemplate such opposition. She has seen no one here to stir the youthful imagination."

"No, you will not have any silly fancies about love to combat, it is true," assented Miss Daunt. "I have kept her mind free of all that nonsense, I think. But in some ways she is an odd girl, Stephen. I have always said so, as you know."

"She is very, very lovely!" he said, reflectively, the next moment, stopping near the table, and gazing at his sister.

"Yes, she is a beauty in her way. Are you touched by her loveliness, then?" queried Miss Rebecca, with a faint shade of irony in her voice.

"I like the thing," he returned, hastily, in his harsh tones, which sounded a little stirred and uneven. "To me she is but a child after all, and I like her. I need pretend nothing to you, of course; that is perfectly absurd between us two. But I tell you, Rebecca, the child Olive really pleases me," he ended, more calmly.

"It is fortunate that you will have every opportunity of studying your liking," she rejoined, still faintly ironic.

That her brother Stephen should be touched in any such fashion seemed to her mad, stony-minded the height of folly. She could hardly believe it of him; and yet he seemed to speak seriously enough. And all because the girl had a pretty face!

"Yes, I shall have every opportunity, as you say," he repeated quietly after her.

"It is to be hoped that she may reciprocate the liking. When will you commence the siege—soon, I suppose?" speaking more seriously.

"I will begin to-morrow," he answered, going to the big broad window, and looking out into the summer night.

The moon had sailed away, and the great chestnuts were veiled in black shadows; but the summer night was calm and unruffled, full of mystic charm.

For the moment, as he gazed out upon nature sleeping so beautifully before him, this man, so full of evil thoughts and plans, felt a shade of regret steal over him. It was but momentary, it is true, but for that moment it made him feel a little breath of remorse, keen and sorrowful; then it fled away, and left but the old callous, evil heart.

"If you do not require me any longer to-night, Stephen, I will go to bed," said Miss Rebecca's voice, coldly, breaking in upon his reverie.

"No, Rebecca, I have nothing more to tell you. Good-night," he answered, turning away from the window as she blew out the wax-candles on the table after lighting two small brass candlesticks. She tendered him one.

"And to-morrow you propose beginning?" she said once more.

"Yes, Rebecca, to-morrow I shall begin."

Then he walked slowly up to his room, and she to hers; and soon the old mill fell asleep, too, in the summer night, to wake with the dawn of another day.

CHAPTER XVI.

"I know not how it is, but a foreboding presses on my heart. I have heard, and from men learned, that before the touch of gold or ill oftentimes a subtler sense informs some spirits of the approach of things to be."

OLIVE awoke with a little shiver and start. There was no reason for her doing so, because she had been sleeping softly and sweetly all the night through, and dreaming of Alan.

Nevertheless, at the moment of her waking the little shiver swept over her, making her start up vaguely disturbed.

"I don't know why or wherefore; but I feel as if something was going to happen to me to-day," she thought, as she rose up and opened the lattice wide to admit all the freshness and sweetness of the early summer morning. "I am not in the habit of indulging in silly superstitions, but I do feel like Damocles must have felt when he saw the sword suspended over his head by a single hair only. It's very nonsensical, very probably; but the air seems full of omens."

Then she bathed, dressed quickly, and ran down into the scented morning. The mill was quite quiet yet; neither Miss Rebecca or her brother rose early, the glory of the morning was nothing to them.

Olive went along the creek to that hallowed spot by the river, henceforth sacred to their love. The sight seemed to calm all the girl's uneasiness of mind, as she stood just where they had stood together last evening.

"After all, why should I fill my brain with all kinds of silly ideas? What have I to be afraid of? Really nothing—nothing. What harm can happen to me now? Have I not Alan? When he comes back no one can hurt me. Oh! my love, my dear, come soon!"

Then she returned again to the water-mill in a calm, happier frame of mind than when she set out.

After the breakfast she took her lace-pillow which the nuns had taught her how to use, and sat on the wooden seat outside the mill in the shade, and began working diligently at a strip of thread-lace, already half-finished. She felt the need of occupation, lest restlessness should fall upon her, and make her once more uneasy.

She had not sat there long before Stephen Daunt joined her. As he sat down by her side she mentally compared him to Alan Chichester, not greatly to Stephen's advantage it must be owned. But, then, is ever a man so charming in a girl's eyes as her own lover? Of course not.

Stephen Daunt was a striking-looking man, at any rate—tall, and not badly built. What was gauntness in his sister's appearance was only a manly frame in his. He had jet black hair, and black eyes set in a somewhat swarthy-hued face, clean shaven.

There was nothing ugly or repulsive about him, only a cold, formal manner, and a harsh-toned voice, which sounded as if it could not possibly be gentle, even if it tried its hardest; but I do think he tried to infuse an unusual gentleness into its harshness as he began a conversation by saying,—

"Olive, I want to have a long talk with you this morning."

"Ah!" thought the girl, inwardly, alarmed in a small, vague way, "it's going to commence; I suppose." But aloud she answered, quickly,—

"Oh, yes, certainly, Mr. Stephen. What shall we talk about—the gaieties of Pont l'Abbaye, for one thing?"

"No; I mean seriously, not on frivolities. You are twenty, Olive; are you not?"

"You should know about that better than I," she returned, quickly, with a little shrug.

"Miss Rebecca told me I was twenty; of course I believed her."

"Yes," he went on, evenly, "you are twenty. Before another twelve months you will be twenty-one. You will come of age."

"Well!" said the girl, looking a little

eagerly at him as he spoke, "and what then? What would happen when I was twenty-one?"

She thought that now perhaps she would hear the secret of her life.

"Nothing," he replied, in the same even tones, fixing his black eyes on her, "nothing would happen when you became twenty-one, except that you would also become a woman, and leave your childhood far behind you."

"I feel a woman now," she put in the next moment, moving the little coloured bobbins of thread in and out on the pillow.

"Possibly you do," he rejoined. "I, of course, am not capable of judging how you feel. What I want to impress upon you now is, that since you have come to years of discretion, and are bordering upon the confines of womanhood, it is quite time you should comprehend your position."

"I shall be very, very glad to know it," she hastened to say, with great emphasis; "it is dreadful to be so terribly in the dark about oneself. I have often longed to know my history."

"Ah! you have longed to know your history!" Stephen Daunt repeated, slowly, after her. "Why, then, did you never ask me about it?"

"Because I was—afraid," she answered, with some hesitation.

"Afraid! Of what—of whom? Not of me, I trust. I do not want you to be afraid of me, Olive. I want you to—like me."

"Oh, it is coming," thought the girl, with a thrill of dread as she heard him.

"Yes, Mr. Stephen," she murmured aloud, twisting the bobbins with immense swiftness, and looking carefully at her work as she answered:

"And you do like me, do you not?" he persisted, calmly, as if it were but a matter of course, and really needed no confirmation.

"You have always been kind to me, Mr. Stephen," Olive murmured again, fencing with the question.

"And I mean to be very kind to you, Olive, because I like you," he condescendedly.

This time the girl answered nothing as she bent over her lace-pillow.

"It has come, I thought it would," she continued, with much inward dissatisfaction and vexation of spirit.

How differently Alan had said he liked her in his pleasant, cheery, kind voice! This man seemed to imagine he was conferring an inestimable favour upon her by deigning to intimate his appreciation; while Alan had almost begged it of her as a boon to himself, and prized accordingly.

At the moment she thought her mind bordered more upon "dislike" than "like." For the life of her, however, she would not have dared to avow her sentiments openly.

"Well, to resume the subject we have wandered from, I have thought it advisable you should now understand in what position you stand at present with regard to us, meaning myself and sister. You say you have often longed to know more about yourself—to know, in fact, your history, do you not?"

"Yes; indeed, I do desire to know above all things," she repeated, forcibly.

"You are sure you wish to know all, everything, if even it was not—pleasant to you to hear?" Stephen asked, once more.

"Yes; all, everything, no matter what, so long as I do know."

"Remember the old adage, where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," he added, with apparent kindly warning.

"While I am ignorant I imagine all kinds of things. It is better to be certain, I am sure; if even, as you say, it should not be pleasant to hear," she answered, low-voiced.

They will have to tell Alan about me when he asks, she thought, but still I would rather know now, beforehand.

"In justice to myself and sister, I must first remark that it has been entirely for your own sake that you have not been told before."

"Is it so very dreadful, then?" she rejoined eagerly, glancing at the man beside her,

and wondering more and more what she was going to hear in the end.

"There are many far worse off than yourself, Olive," he answered, calmly, returning her anxious gaze, "many who would have been reared more hardly than you have been for your twenty past years. You have had care, attention, a home; many like yourself would have lacked all these."

Olive noticed that Stephen Daunt spoke the same words almost that Miss Daunt had done when she dilated to the girl upon the necessity of her manifesting some gratitude for favours done her. It seemed a kind of prescribed formula that each used to urge their point.

"You have both been kind to me, I know quite well, Mr. Stephen," she acknowledged at once, for she knew that in a measure he only spoke what was true.

She had received care, attention, and a home, just as he said. Affection had been absent, but that seemed on the point of being produced now for her benefit—the one thing she had hitherto lacked in her life. A benefit, however, she could well dispense with, one not needed or desired in any way. She would far rather it were not offered her now, for she did not want it. It came too late, she had something sweeter far than a tardy offer of affection—which was love!

"Most people, if they knew all the circumstances, would give credit for being more than merely kind," Stephen went on, complacently. "I do not wish to boast of our kindness, but, as a matter of fact, we have been very good to you, Olive."

He lays the law down in a dry, stiff fashion without giving her any reasons, any whys or wherefores, on the subject. She is not told what came to pass that the two should have taken such an interest in her welfare. His words lead her to suppose that it all proceeded from pure goodwill, generosity of heart, and a sympathetic disposition; if so, they have always strangely belied their own character by an outward harshness.

"I mean to be grateful, Mr. Stephen," she answered at length, turning her great brown eyes pleadingly towards him, "and someday I hope to be able to repay you for your kindness, you and Miss Rebecca both. At present I am very helpless in the matter of being able to show gratitude to you for all you have done for me; but in the future, some time I hope it will be in my power to show you I am not an ungrateful girl," she ended, thinking that when she should be married to Alan, she would ask him to benefit them in some way, as it should please them.

"Not some day, Olive," Stephen rejoined, laying an emphasis on the word some. "You must try to repay me soon."

"How?" she queried, faintly, feeling that she was beginning to tread upon dangerous ground, and yet not knowing how best to avoid treading upon it. "I know of no way, except a few commonplace speeches."

"There is another way, and it lies in your power to do so now. I want you to repay me in this way. I want you to promise to be—my wife!"

"Oh! I can't, I can't do that, Mr. Stephen. Please do not ask me," Olive answered hurriedly, almost in an agony of remonstrance against such an idea.

"But I do ask you. Let me hear you say that you will," he proceeded evenly, as if to demand was to gain possession of her promise without further parley.

"I can't say it," she said again, bluntly. There should be no mistake as to a negative. She was determined upon showing him. She said no, and she most emphatically meant no at the same time.

"Why can you not say it, Olive?" he inquired quite calmly, gazing at the pretty, agitated face beside him, as one would imagine some snake might watch the writhings of a little bird which it would soon overpower and destroy in its coils. "Give me some reason for this decisive cannot."

"There is no reason but that I cannot,"

she returned, still blantly; "indeed, you must not ask it of me, Mr. Stephen."

"But I do ask it of you," he persisted, without any temper, however. Perhaps he felt so sure of his little bird that he did not care to exhibit any heat or sudden swoop down, lest it should alarm the little bird, "and you are going to say yes!"

"No, I am not," said Olive, quickly, raising her eyes to his a little more defiantly now.

"Yes, you will, when you have thought of it a little. Listen, Olive. I will give you one week to think over it. This day week I shall ask you again, remember."

"But I can answer everything now just as well as in a week's time," she asserted boldly. Evidently timorousness would not avail her here. "I shall say nothing more than I do now. Please do not ask me again," she ended, a little pleadingly once more.

"I most certainly shall, and I am sure a week will find you in quite a different mind about it," he returned, calmly and confidently.

"Oh no, it will not," she put in doggedly.

"Time will show. You talk of your gratitude. Prove your own words, and show it is not the empty vapouring of a silly girl who really does not know what is best for her."

"I do know what is best for me quite well."

"Pardon me, I do not think so. But we will discuss the question no longer now. As I say, in a week's time I shall ask you again."

"And I shall say no," murmured the girl mutinously below her breath.

He took no notice of her low-voiced remark, which he must have heard, however, and which was intended for him to hear. Probably he thought it better at that moment to ignore it discreetly. Sometimes it is policy to be a little deaf.

Besides, he imagined Olive's mutiny was only a passing feeble antagonism, easily beaten down and overwhelmed in the current of his own strong will, backed, too, by his sister's, Miss Rebecca's. He never for one instant contemplated any serious eventual opposition from the girl.

For the specified week he would be as sweet as honey to her, and woo her as much as he knew how; then, at the end of it, he felt sure the would flutter to him like the pretty little bird she was.

Her emphatic rejection of his overtures amused him rather than mortified. He never intended they should carry the smallest weight in the end. In his own mind the whole thing was a settled thing, with or without her sanction.

Olive's yea freely given was desirable, because it would save the trouble of enforcing it, if necessary.

"I must leave you now," he said, after a pause, rising from the wooden bench; and he spoke as if his presence must be an infinite pleasure to her. "I have some business letters to write for the post."

"Yes!" she answered, briefly, keeping the little bobbins busily employed.

Stephen stood silently in front of her, looking down at her for a minute or so; then he said, in his harsh tones,

"Why, Olive, you foolish child, you do not know how much you owe me. I am the very best friend you have. Shall I tell you what you would have been but for me?"

"Yes, Mr. Stephen, what should I have been but for you?" Olive answered, rapidly, raising her face from her work.

"A foundling!" he said, with grimmest meaning; "a poor thing reared on charity! Think how much better off you have been here, well provided for."

"A foundling! a poor thing reared on charity!" she echoed in a whisper after him.

In all her ideas about herself, this had never crossed her mind. She had imagined herself anything but that; and she heard it now for the first time with a kind of blank terror. When Alan heard, what would he say to it?

Suppose it should prove a barrier between them?

The very thought made her face pale, and her brown eyes shine with a feverish and unnatural lustre.

Stephen Daunt watching her, and seeing the pallor, fancied it was on account of his words. The real reason he never guessed, of course.

"Yes, Olive, I can but tell you the truth, however I might wish to do otherwise," he rejoined, with an air of kindness; "but we will not allude to it any further. It shall remain a buried subject henceforth between us. If it has hurt you I am sorry," he ended, laying one hand on the girl's shoulder.

"No, it has not hurt me," she repeated, low voiced, still thinking what her lover might say, and with an intense desire to fling away that patronising hand, which seemed to feel like a leaden weight.

"You said you longed to know, so I told you the truth," he went on, still with an air of pitying kindness; "but it will never make any difference to me, Olive. I shall like you just the same. In fact, I may say I—I—love you," he jerked out at last.

Then he waited a moment more to see if she made him any response; but no sound broke the silence, and her lips remained closely shut. He finally raised that leaden hand from her shoulder, and spoke once more.

"I am certain you will say yes when I ask you again. That is how you can best repay me, Olive, and the only way."

Then he left her, and went indoors.

She heard him tread slowly down the corridor and into the room, closing the door behind him; and she gave a gasp of relief, morally flinging his presence far away from her. It seemed more distasteful to her now than ever it had done before.

After this the girl sat deep in thought, the lace pillow lying idle on her knees.

"A foundling!" she murmured to herself, almost bitterly; "only a foundling, after all. I wonder if he tells me the truth? Yet he could surely have no motive in saying it if it were not so. If Alan should desert me because of it? Oh, Heaven! please do not let my happiness go from me," she went on, in an agony of dread; "it is not my fault that I am what I am. I did not make myself. Let me keep my happiness, I implore."

Then she thought of Stephen, and what he had just said. She set her red lips together tightly, and a frown came on her brows.

"So you love me, do you, Stephen Daunt? Well, and I believe I—hate you!"

(To be continued.)

THERE are few things in life more interesting than an unrestricted interchange of ideas with a congenial spirit, and there are few things more rare.

The frankness of the American young woman has in it, on the threshold, a certain bewilderment and even embarrassment for the British male person, especially if his collars be stiffly starched, writes Archibald Forbes. She has so utter an apparent absence of self-consciousness; her mental equipoise is so serenely stable; her good fellowship, if one may use the term, is so natural, that he cannot see his way easily to the solution of the problem. I assume him to be a gentleman, so that his intuition deters him from a misconception of the phenomena that confront him. She flirts, he finds; she is an adept in flirtation, but it is a flirtation "from the teeth onwards," to use Carlyle's phrase; and he is fain to own himself, like the fox-hunting farmer who tries unsuccessfully to get drunk on the claret, that he seems to "get no forrarder." But although the citadel of the fortress seems to him strangely impregnable because of the cool, alert self-possession of the garrison, I have been told by heroic persons who have ventured on the escalade that if the beleaguerer be he whom fortune favours it will

terminate an honourable siege by a graceful capitulation. Human nature is human nature all the world over. And there is no greater error than the prevalent one among us, that domesticity is not a leading virtue of American married couples. That there is too much of hotel life for American families I concede, and I am fully conscious of the faults and evils of the system; but that it entails any impairment of the higher domestic virtues I have failed to discover. It is not easy to see how a woman is deteriorated as the companion and friend of a man—as the participator in his aspirations, his troubles, his studies, his higher life—because her condition releases her from the duty of devising the details of a dinner, from the irritation of demoniacal domestics, from the drudgery of checking the grocer's pass-book, and the sad realization that all bakers are liars, and mostly robbers as well.

WATER IS FATTENING.—It has been observed that water is fattening, that those who drink large quantities of water have a tendency to fulness and rotundity. That there is considerable truth in this observation the *Medical and Surgical Reporter* fully substantiates. That excessive imbibition of very cold (iced) water (especially when one is very warm) is not to be commended, yet we have reason to believe that the unlimited use of pure spring water, at its natural temperature, is not only very conducive to health, but has an actual tendency to favour a fulness and roundness of body. Whether this is the result of a better action on the part of the digestive, assimilative, and depurative functions, owing to the internal cleanliness or flushing of the human sewers produced by large quantities of water, or whether water has any specific action in producing this fulness, we do not know; neither does it signify, since observation confirms as a fact that the free use of water does have this effect.

A NIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH PANTHERS.—After the departure of some guests, who had killed three panthers during their stay, says a writer, I found myself alone, and very much fatigued, when an Arab came to me from the mountains near—this was on the third—begging me to go and look after a lion that had just devoured one of his cows. As the moon was not sufficiently advanced, I waited a few days, during which two other animals, placed there expressly by the Arabs, had been killed also. (You must bear in mind that in this case one animal is sacrificed to save the entire herd.) On the fifth day, between four and six o'clock in the afternoon, I settled myself in my hiding place, or affut, amid the brushwood. The rain poured down in torrents. I was soon wet through, and also very cold. At ten o'clock the rain ceased. I heard the borrico I had put as a bait suddenly roll over, and a noise of something being dragged. It was a panther that was trying to carry it off into the thicket. I could see nothing. The little open space in my court of brushwood through which my gun passed was stopped up by the weight of the rain bearing down the branches. I very gently made an opening, which caused the panther to lift up its head. I could see its white throat, and took aim. It fell down close by. I recharged my gun, for I could not see if my panther was dead, the moon being hidden by the clouds. Half-an-hour later I heard the noise of some huge animal eating away at the borrico. I lifted the branches as noiselessly as possible, but the intruder took note, and, rising, passed within two yards of my hiding place. I only saw a huge black mass, at which I fired, and effectually. At break of day, on issuing forth from a thicket, I found within a few yards of each other two magnificent panthers, a male and a female. I heartily thanked Sir Hubert for having sent me, with the worst weather in the world, a night that was all a hunter could desire. This is the fifth panther killed by myself and guests within a month, to the great joy of the Arabs, whose flocks and herds they had been devastating.

ONE THOUSAND POUNDS REWARD.

CHAPTER X.

GUY SINGLETON'S hearing before the magistrate came off in due course. It ended in his being committed for trial, bail not being allowed. Lord Chippendale and other gentlemen would willingly have come forward as his sureties had they been permitted to do so.

The offence, however, was a grave one, and no exception could be made in the culprit's favour simply because he happened to be a gentleman.

Elinor had to be present at the hearing, her evidence being the most important. The mental agony she endured was so palpable that the magistrate kindly dismissed her as soon as possible.

She kept her eyes fixed upon the ground while relating what she knew of the jewel robbery, and answering the various questions put to her. Only once did she venture to raise them to Guy Singleton's face. Worn, haggard, changed, it yet expressed forgiveness and compassion, as if, in commiserating the wretchedness of her position, he had lost sight of his own.

Clifford Dacre went about with a defiant air, as if challenging other people's right to criticise his conduct in thus prosecuting his own cousin. He hated Guy, and it afforded him a great deal of malicious satisfaction to think how low the young fellow had fallen. He talked in a bombastic manner of abstract justice, and the entire absence of personal animus that distinguished him in thus allowing the law to take its own course.

Other people, though, were keen enough to see through this flimsy pretence, and it did not add to his popularity throughout the county. The least he could have done, all declared, was to have put an end to the prosecution, had the whole affair hushed up, and given Guy something to go abroad with.

Considering that he had stepped into the inheritance his cousin had been brought up to regard as his own, it would not have been such an overwhelming concession.

But Clifford Dacre had no desire to play such a magnanimous and forgiving part towards poor Guy. The latter was down, and he wished to keep him there, veiling his dislike and malice meanwhile, and declaring the attitude he had assumed towards Guy to be the result of high principle. Most men hate humbug, although they avail themselves of it more or less, and Clifford Dacre's heartless policy, with its leaven of hypocritical pretension, gave rise to a great deal of disgust.

Mrs. Dacre and Susie Heath were quite as sorry for Guy as any of the outsiders, who had always liked the handsome, generous-hearted young man. Only they dared not give expression to their sorrow when Clifford Dacre was present. The loss of the diamonds seemed but a small thing as compared with the misery to which it had given rise—misery that threatened to cast a lasting blight over two young lives.

Elinor hardly knew how the dull, grey day came and went. She had become deaf and blind to all that was going on around her. Bitter, reproachful reveries, fearful forebodings, and useless regrets occupied her mind from morning till night, and neither Susie's nor Mrs. Dacre's remonstrances availed to rouse her from the lethargic, hopeless state into which she had fallen.

"How little we anticipated all this trouble when we were looking forward to Christmas," Mrs. Dacre remarked wearily to her cousin, after an ineffectual attempt to persuade Elinor to go for a walk. "I don't think I will ever look forward to any particular season again. It's a comfort to have got rid of our visitors. At least we need not put on company faces, and laugh and talk, when

feeling unutterably miserable. Elinor is going away from us to-morrow. After what has occurred she doesn't care to stay here any longer, and I'm not surprised."

"Is she going home?" inquired Susie, whose private and particular troubles pressed heavily upon her mind. Bertie Cavendish and Ned Lawrence had gone away, it is true, but in a very unfriendly mood with each other; while both men sought to gain the first place in her favour, and refused to take no for an answer.

"Mrs. Sylvester has given her an invitation," replied her cousin. "I fancy the poor child shrinks from the idea of going home and leaving Belmont altogether until the trial is over. If anything could move Clifford to pity it would surely be the sight of her pale, sorrowful face."

Before quitting the now hateful Abbey to complete her visit with Mrs. Sylvester, a widow lady who owned a pretty villa residence about a mile from Belmont, Elinor made one ineffectual effort to shake Clifford Dacre's decision, and arouse a feeling of pity and forgiveness in his heart towards Guy.

"He is your kinsman," she said, pleadingly, standing before him with loosely clasped hands and dry, burning eyes, from which no tears came to her relief. "Can you not afford to overlook the wrong he has done when you remember the expectations in which he was reared, and the bitter disappointment that befell him when you were declared to be Roger Belmont's heir in Guy's stead?"

"The circumstances you mention have no direct bearing upon the case in point," he replied, with brutal indifference. "Since Roger Belmont chose to leave the estate to me I am not bound to offer any compensation or to show any clemency to Guy Singleton on that account. Had he been consulted in the matter it would not have been mine. He took what didn't belong to him, and he must bear the penalty, in common with other offenders."

"But for your sordid conduct, your meanness in refusing to advance him the few thousands for which he asked, the diamonds would not have been stolen!" flashed Elinor.

"My refusal does not justify him in taking my wife's diamonds though," said Clifford Dacre, with a sneer. "You are about as logical in the arguments you employ as the majority of your sex, Miss Campbell."

"If the jewels could be traced, and money were got together for the purpose of restoring them, would you, in that case, refuse to appear against him?" she inquired, eagerly.

"No, that would be compounding a felony," he said, doggedly. "I shall go through with what I have begun. There is not one atom of nonsensical sentiment in my nature. If all the pretty girls in Christendom were to come to me in a body, asking to have that fellow let off, I wouldn't do it."

"You may stand in need of mercy yourself some day. Will you not regret then that you refused to extend it to others?"

"That concerns no one but myself; I'm ready to meet my own liabilities. It doesn't often happen that the one who has just succeeded in bringing a thief to justice shows such a strong desire to obtain his freedom."

The blood rushed into Elinor's pale face at this heartless reminder; while the withering rebuke, the intense loathing that flashed from her blue eyes, caused Clifford Dacre's light orbs to quail before them.

"Yes, I betrayed the man I love," she said, slowly; "but for me he might not have been arrested. The knowledge of what I have done would drive me mad were it not for the reflection that I acted in ignorance, deceived by the disguise he had assumed. Had the faintest inkling of the truth dawned upon my mind, not to recover all the wealth you possess would I have helped to hunt him down."

"You may regret your action in the matter, but the fact remains the same," he remarked, insolently. "You led to the discovery of the thief, and are entitled to share in the reward

offered. I shall be happy to write you a cheque whenever you care to claim it."

Elinor turned to go.

"I did not come here to be insulted," she replied, with dearly-bought composure, "although from you I could hardly expect to receive the courtesy of a gentleman. You are incapable of realising the misery that you have helped to produce. Guy Singleton, low as he has fallen, is yet infinitely your superior in every respect. Ask anyone throughout the county the name of the man for whom, at this moment, they feel the most sympathy, and they will answer Guy Singleton. Ask them again whom they most dislike and despise, and they will tell you Clifford Dacre!"

Mrs. Sylvester, a bright, pleasant little woman, with plenty of tact, and no great joys or sorrows of her own to prevent her from giving her whole attention to those of others, was in every way calculated to aid and console Elinor in her almost unprecedented affliction.

She strove to check the exaggerated sense of remorse that weighed so heavily upon the poor girl's mind. Finding that she was not likely to gain any peace until she had seen Guy, Mrs. Sylvester consented to accompany her to the prison in which he was confined.

Through a little piece of kindly favoritism the interview was permitted to take place in the governor's private apartment.

Guy's grey eyes looked hollow and sunken, and there were deep lines already showing themselves on his open, handsome face. His impatience and irritability had vanished, giving place to a quiet, pathetic resignation, a manly, dignified submission to the inevitable that smote Elinor to the heart as she observed it.

"Oh, Guy, can you forgive me for what I have done?" she cried, miserably.

"My poor darling, there is nothing to forgive," he replied, drawing her to him, while Mrs. Sylvester interested herself with some books at the other end of the room. "You would not have pointed me out had you been aware of my identity, I am quite sure of that. It is I who am to blame for yielding to the temptation that has resulted in so much misery for us both."

"What fatal impulse prompted me to turn down that side street, I wonder?" she sobbed.

"Had I gone round as usual I should not have seen you."

"We cannot fight against destiny, dear," said Guy, striving to soothe her agitation that far exceeded his own, "and these links in the chain of our lives are not riveted by mere chance."

"You say all this to pacify me," she persisted, "but you know that, had I consented to go with you to Canada in the first instance, this could not have occurred."

"You were quite right to refuse your consent to my foolish proposal. The hardship and the climate out there would have killed you. Indeed you are not to blame. Let us speak of something else, or we shall waste our brief interview in mutual self-reproach."

"I have tried to move Clifford Dacre's hard heart to pity you, Guy, but he is merciless."

"You should not have done that," said Guy, quickly. "I would sooner undergo penal servitude than seek for pardon and clemency at that man's hands."

"Where are the diamonds?" she asked, in a whisper. "If they could only be produced it would surely tell in your favour."

"They are gone, past redemption," he replied, firmly. "They vanished into a yawning gulf, and the success I hoped to achieve through their agency proved itself to be an empty bubble."

"But, Guy, how could you get rid of so much money so quickly?" said Elinor, wondering. "They were valued at nine thousand pounds!"

Guy smiled sadly.

"I did not receive near that amount for

them," he replied. "It is one thing to buy and another to sell, especially when the goods happen to be stolen ones. Some men lose ten times as much on the turf. Do you remember the night of the fancy dress ball, Nell, and our meeting in the conservatory?"

"Yes."

"The news of my big loss had just reached me, and I knew that I had sinned in vain. In my utter despair I determined to take my life, my disgraced, dishonoured life. But I could not die without seeing you once more, and I was taking what I thought to be my last glance at you when you saw me, and uttered those earnest, loving words that brought me back to a better frame of mind."

Elinor shuddered as she recalled the scene. "I knew you were in some great peril, Guy; you will never indulge such a fearful idea again?"

"No, the madness has passed away, to return no more. For the future I will face my troubles manfully, remembering that it frequently requires more courage to live than to die."

"How came the detective to find the gray hat lying in the park? Did you place it there purposely?"

"No, I wore it one night when I went to smoke a cigar in the shrubbery, and the wind blew it off. I put it on from sheer bravado, since suspicion did not point in my direction then. I wish I had been less venturesome. The hat furnished that fellow with a clue."

"My dear, we have only five minutes left," interposed Mrs. Sylvester, warningly. "We must not abuse the governor's kindness."

"Can nothing be done, Guy?" cried Elinor, feverishly. "Must we sit down with folded hands to await the trial?"

"We must, indeed," he rejoined, sadly and submissively. "I dread it more for your sake than my own. That cursed racing! I am not going in for abstract gaol-bird penitence, Nell, but I am fain to admit that the turf and its many adjuncts tend to pervert a man's morals, to lower the tone of his mind, and generally degrade him in the scale of humanity. My ancestors, could they rise from their graves, would shrink from their unworthy descendant."

"But I shall never shrink from you, Guy," replied. "That is what I have yet to speak of," he replied. "I am a disgraced man now, Nell, and on that account I free you from your promise. I renounce all claim upon your fidelity. You must learn to forget me."

"I shall never do that," said Elinor, solemnly. "If you are found guilty and imprisoned I shall wait for you, earning my own living meanwhile. When you come out I shall meet you at the prison-gates, and we will get married quietly and go to America; or any other place you choose to decide upon. In that way alone can I atone for the wrong and the suffering I have helped to produce."

He could not trust himself to speak, but he caught her in his arms and kissed her passionately, then motioned to Mrs. Sylvester to take her away.

CHAPTER XI.

The theft of the Belmont diamonds excited an immense amount of interest throughout the county. The peculiar circumstances under which the robbery had been committed, and the high social status of the man who had taken them, served to single it out for special notice.

The local papers teemed with allusions to it, and the Assizes were eagerly looked forward to by people of all classes.

Guy Singleton having decided to plead guilty, against the advice, and greatly to the disgust, of the eminent counsel retained for his defence, it was impossible to get up an elaborate case to assert the prisoner's innocence, in accordance with the usual legal traditions.

It only remained to make the most of facts bearing indirectly upon the case, and to

represent Clifford Dacre in the worst light as a monster of meanness, regardless of blood ties and family connections, in order to arouse sympathy and compassion for the offender.

The Reverend Claude Grenville was among Guy's most frequent visitors while in prison. The Vicar had ground Latin and Euclid into him as a boy, and, later on, had carefully and successfully coached him for his examination.

A firm friendship existed between the two men, and the Vicar deeply regretted the trouble and disgrace that had befallen his old pupil.

They held long confidential discussions, Guy freely unburdening his mind upon every subject save the disposal of the diamonds.

He would not say what he had done with them, or utter a word likely to include any one else in the transaction, and bring them within the reach of the law.

Not once during the long solitary hours spent in his cell, thinking over his ruined prospects and the sentence that awaited him, did Guy regret the love that had brought him to this pass, leading first to his disinheritation, and then urging him on to commit a crime, in order to gain money.

He was wise enough to distinguish between his love for Elinor and the temptation which he might have resisted, had he endeavoured to do so.

The loss of property consequent upon his attachment to Elinor was unavoidable, but not so the offence, the purloining of another man's goods, to which it had given rise through his mad haste to win her.

Graceful girl and slender stripling, they had grown up in close proximity to each other—she at the Vicarage, he at the Abbey. And their love had grown with them almost unconsciously.

Guy's college days, and the removal of Elinor's father to another living, had served to part them, but not to destroy the links so firmly riveted.

Occasional intercourse had prevented them from drifting apart, and enabled each to gain a deeper insight into the other's sympathetic nature and ever-increasing love.

No, come what might, Guy would never regret his passion for Elinor.

Her present sorrow and distress for the harm she had all unwittingly wrought him only endeared her to him the more. For good or for ill she formed the lodestar of his life.

Old Prebble, the gardener at the Abbey, waylaid the Vicar one day, on the latter's return from visiting Guy, to ask some questions about him.

Brought up by his uncle as the son of the house, the old servants all doted upon Guy, whose frank, light-hearted, genial manner had gained a firm hold upon their affection. They liked him almost as much as they disliked their new master, Clifford Dacre.

"How do he bear up under it, your reverence?" inquired Prebble, commiseratingly.

"Pretty well," replied the Vicar, stooping down from his stout cob to answer the old man; "but the confinement is injuring his health. He mentioned your name the other day, Prebble, and spoke of the tricks he used to play you in his schooldays."

"Did he now?" said Prebble, in a gratified tone. "He was always in high spirits, was Master Guy; ready to lead the others when any mad game could be gone in for without the old Squire knowing it. To think of his being shut up there in goal, it seems terrible, sir. Can't nothing be done to get him out?"

"I'm afraid not," said the Vicar, sadly. "He must take the consequences of his rash act, much as we all regret it."

"If money could do it now," continued Prebble, earnestly, "I'd put my savings of the last twenty years towards making a free man of him, and think them well spent."

"Money is not lacking," said his spiritual adviser; "Lord Chippendale would gladly stand bail for him if bail were allowed."

Prebble emitted a disapproving grunt. "His lordship's money may be all right,"

he remarked, vindictively, "but he can't be up to much himself, or he wouldn't have spoken of you, sir, as I overheard him doing to another gentleman in the grounds last Christmas. It was the very worst swearing I ever heard. Billingsgate ain't nothing compared to it."

The corners of the Vicar's large, mobile mouth began to twitch suspiciously; he scented fun in the distance.

"Indeed," he observed, with a gravity becoming to the subject, "I was not aware that Lord Chippendale indulged in bad language, Prebble, or that I had forfeited his good opinion. What did the words you allude to consist of?"

"It was a word, one word in particular, that I won't demean myself by repeating."

"But I insist upon hearing it," said the Vicar, with a decided air. "Well, then, he said you was a decided lat-i-too-di-na-ri-an, begging your reverence's pardon for saying such a thing as your presence."

The Vicar laughed heartily, laughed till the quiet woods rang again, while old Prebble regarded him with a horrified expression. If the clergy could afford to laugh at such profanity what might not be expected from the laity?

For the credit of his cloth the Vicar felt bound to explain.

"It's not a wrong word, Prebble," he said, good-naturedly, "although Lord Chippendale probably used it as a word of reproach when alluding to me. It means that I do not condemn other people for refusing to believe just as I believe myself, or think all opinions but my own worthless or wicked."

"In that case it's a pity there ain't more lat-i-what's-his-names to be found, then," rejoined Prebble, with an air of relief. "There's a many people who set themselves up for judges that would make much better culprits. I'm glad, though, to hear it was nothing so bad after all. That there word's been on my mind for weeks past."

Dainess reigned supreme within the Abbey. No more guests had been invited by its owner. But for Susie Heath Mrs. Dacre would have had only the society of her amiable lord and master to fall back upon.

Clifford Dacre's temper did not improve as the coldness of his neighbours and their avoidance of him became more strongly marked. He laid his social failure at Guy's door, and no well-meant remonstrance from mutual friends could shake the bulldog obstinacy with which he set himself to work out the young man's ruin through the agency of the law.

Susie Heath's perplexities reached their climax when she received a letter from Bertie Cavendish, informing her that, upon the death of a relative, he had recently come into a nice little estate valued at four thousand a year. He wound up by urging his suit upon her more vehemently than ever, and announcing his intention of coming down to the Abbey in person to receive his reply.

The next post brought her a letter from Ned Lawrence. Poor Ned, upon whom fortune had bestowed neither briefs nor legacies, wrote in a very desponding mood. He had heard of his rival's stroke of good luck, and he felt pretty sure that Bertie would use it to turn the scales in his favour, and win the first place in Susie's good books.

He implored her in passionate terms to wait until he should be in a position to claim her, while reproaching her for all the mental disquiet she had caused him; winding up with a dark threat to go to ruin by a short cut in the event of her rejecting him, and promising to marry Bertie Cavendish.

It was not by any means a pleasant letter to receive, and Susie, between her two suitors, felt rather frightened. She was only certain upon one point, that she did not wish to marry either of them; and she stood greatly in need of advice. But to whom could she go? Elinor Camp-

bell was absorbed in her own great trouble, and Mrs. Dacre, although a nice, good-natured little woman, was hardly capable of advising anyone when such an important matter as the choice of a husband was in question.

Susie was standing on the rustic bridge that spanned the river at one end of the village on her return from a long, solitary ramble, gazing listlessly down into the clear water, when she espied a tall man carrying a Gladstone bag coming towards her from the station.

For one brief second her heart fairly jumped into her mouth. She thought it was Bertie Cavendish, and coward-like, prepared to take refuge in flight.

But a second glance convinced her that the tall, soldier-like form, the erect military carriage, belonged to Captain Falconer.

He joined her upon the bridge, and they exchanged greetings, feeling somewhat uncertain as to the attitude they were to assume towards each other. Active warfare had previously existed between them, but a truce was mutually decided upon, as each had grown rather tired of fighting.

"You have not been long away?" said Susie, for want of a better remark.

"No. Dacre told me I might run down for a day or two whenever I liked, without waiting for a formal invitation," said the Captain, glancing keenly at the pretty troubled face beneath the Mary Anderson hat. "You see I have taken him at his word, Miss Heath. I hardly hoped to find you still here."

"Oh, I am a fixture," replied Susie, with a wan smile. "Mrs. Dacre is glad to have me with her. We are by no means a lively party at the Abbey now."

"Are you alluding to poor Guy's imprisonment, or to some other trouble?" inquired Captain Falconer.

"That is very dreadful," she rejoined, hesitatingly, "but—"

"There is something else," he continued. "I wish you would put your dislike for me on one side, and make me your confidant."

Susie's pride and wilfulness vanished as that deep, tender, musical voice fell upon her ear. It would be humiliating to confess her faults and their consequences to the man who had once openly rebuked her. But she had no one else to turn to for advice, and somehow he seemed to be more sympathetic and less hateful than of old.

You scolded me once for flirting," she began, nervously; "you said I had no right to draw men on just to please my own vanity. I have been well punished for my heartlessness since then. If you read these letters you will understand the predicament in which I am placed."

She handed him the two letters, and he read them without making any immediate remark.

"Well," she said, rather impatiently, as he gave them back to her.

"Do you intend to marry Bertie Cavendish?" he inquired, his handsome face growing a shade paler.

"No, a thousand times no!"

"Or Ned Lawrence?"

"Certainly not; I don't care for either of them in that way. I only want to get rid of them both, and to know that they are on friendly terms with each other again. They were like Damon and Pythias till I came between them."

"I can see but one way out of the difficulty," said Captain Falconer; "but then you may not care to adopt it."

"I would do almost anything to regain my peace of mind."

Captain Falconer proceeded to unfold his plan. Susie's cheeks grew rosy red as she listened to him, and broke an unoffending twig into twenty pieces.

"It shall be as you wish," she said, with downcast eyes, when he paused and waited eagerly for an answer. "You will see them both and prevent them from coming here again to persecute me?"

"I will."

"And you'll try and reconcile them to—existing circumstances and each other?"

"Most decidedly."

"It is certainly a very original method for getting out of a difficulty."

"And a very satisfactory one into the bargain," he replied, radiantly. "At least, I think so. I consider the idea to be the most brilliant I have ever evolved from my inner consciousness."

"I shall not add to your self-esteem by praising it," said Susie, with a queer little smile; "you know how much I dislike you, Captain Falconer."

CHAPTER XII.

"Elinor, Granny Pengold sent a boy here this morning with a message that she should like very much to see you before you go away," said Mrs. Sylvester to her guest. "You know she is bed-ridden, and not likely to live long, poor old soul. Why not go and see her to-day? The walk would do you good."

"I might meet some of the people from the Abbey," replied Elinor, listlessly, "and I wish to avoid them, one and all. What can Granny Pengold want to see me for?"

"I don't know; perhaps it is only a sick woman's whim; but I think, were I you, I would gratify it. My dear girl, you really must make an effort to bear your trouble bravely, and shake off this terrible depression, or you will be ill."

She put down her work and glanced compassionately at Elinor as she spoke. The latter was crouching over the fire with a book, of which she had not read a line, in her hand.

There were great dark circles round the girl's blue eyes; her cheeks had paled and fallen in, while a look of intense, helpless misery was never absent from her face.

The terrible position in which she found herself placed had effected this sad change; the once light-hearted, happy, talented girl was now a weary, remorseful, anguished woman, bearing about with her wherever she went a crushing load of sorrow and suspense, that threatened soon to break her down either in mind or body.

That Guy Singleton should be in prison awaiting his trial at the Assizes through her instrumentality alone seemed hardly possible to her, as she brooded ceaselessly over the hideous fact—the nightmare that refused to vanish before the cheerful light of day.

Guy, her Guy, who would not have yielded to temptation in the first instance but for the love he bore her, to be thus disgraced and held up to public notice! Oh, it was too horrible! Her ambitious ideas and her weak dread of poverty had urged him on to amass wealth by any means. Then, when he might have escaped the consequences of his wrong-doing, she had stood in his way, and pointed him to the paid hirelings of Justice. The most fiendish woman could hardly have proved herself to be a more fatal Circe than poor Elinor, who had thus, in all innocence, frustrated the plans and destroyed the good name of the man she loved best on earth.

She took a bitter delight in painting her own conduct towards him in the blackest possible colours. She regarded the theft he had committed less as his crime than her own, since, but for her, such a wild, wicked scheme would not have occurred to him.

She grew paler and thinner day by day, while the knowledge that she would be the principal witness against him when the trial came on nearly maddened her. Night after night Elinor's overwrought brain brought the dreaded scene before her in sleep. The crowded court, the eager, excited lookers-on, the stern-faced judge, and last, but not least, the prisoner in the dock, with his sad, forgiving face turned towards his unwilling accuser. She went through it all scores of times, to wake just as the sentence was being delivered with a moan and a prayer that something might

happen to prevent that fearful trial from ever taking place.

Her father had written, telling her to return home, but she had prevailed upon him to let her stay a little longer with Mrs. Sylvester. The small parsonage, the noisy children, the questions she would be expected to answer concerning Guy's capture, made her dread leaving the quiet retreat where tortured nerves and brain had no annoyance from without to contend against.

A second letter, written in a more imperative strain than the first, admitted of no further reprieve, however. Much as she liked her, Mrs. Sylvester was not sorry to learn that Elinor's stay was drawing to a close. The girl's changed appearance made her feel very uneasy, and, after all, her mother was the right person for her to be with under the circumstances.

"You will have your packing to do tomorrow, dear," said gentle Mrs. Sylvester. "Be persuaded by me; go and see poor Granny Pengold this afternoon. She will be so disappointed if you leave without paying her the visit she has asked for! I'll put the wing of a chicken and some jelly in a little basket for her, and you can take it with you."

"Very well," rejoined Elinor, passively. It seemed such an unimportant affair either way; only she had no wish to disappoint Granny Pengold, one of her father's old parishioners.

Mrs. Sylvester wrapped her up warmly and started her off, basket in hand.

As the girl went along the road with bowed head and fur cloak wrapped closely around her, Mrs. Sylvester watched her from the window gravely and anxiously.

"If she is compelled to give evidence against Guy her reason will become affected," thought the kind-hearted little lady, sadly. "She is bearing a heavy burden, poor child, and circumstances have woven a terrible web around her."

Elinor went on her way, regardless of the bleak cutting wind, and the occasional rain flakes. External discomforts troubled her not at all, since her thoughts were constantly turned inward, dwelling upon her own great trouble, and the crowning misery of the approaching trial.

To day, for the first time, she had been able to arrive at a definite conclusion. The fog had lifted from off her mind, leaving it bright and clear for action.

She would not give evidence against Guy; no power on earth should compel her to do so. Since he had pleaded guilty, a term of imprisonment doubtless awaited him under any circumstances. She, however, would not be there to take her place in the witness-box. Had she not done him harm enough already?

Instead of going to her home on the following day, Elinor determined to go to London and lose herself there for awhile. Always accustomed to loving protection, the idea of being thrown among strangers, dependent upon her efforts for a livelihood, was a terrible one to her. But it formed the only alternative. She had a little money with her, and when that was gone she would be able to earn more by teaching. Anything seemed preferable to appearing in court as a witness for the prosecution.

Her plans were only partly matured by the time she arrived at Granny Pengold's cottage.

With its thatched roof and diamond-paned windows, round which grew a hardy red creeper, the little domicile presented a very picturesque appearance.

Elinor lifted the latch and passed through the homely parlour into the bedroom beyond.

Granny Pengold, who had expected company, was sitting up in bed, a little scarlet and grey shawl that Elinor had knitted being thrown round her shoulders, while a large-trilled white night-cap adorned her head.

She was a tall, big-made woman, with a wrinkled fresh-coloured face, and a quantity

of neatly-arranged grey hair. Simple and wholesome as the flowers that grew in her cottage garden, Granny Pengold was not without her share of homespun wisdom and shrewdness.

She had nursed Squire Belmont during his last illness, and she took a keen interest in the fortunes of the Belmont family, with which she had been connected more or less all her lifetime.

"Eh, Miss Elinor, but I am glad to see you," she said, earnestly as Elinor approached the bedside. "A sight of you is good for sair een, as the Scotch folks say. Take off your hat and cloak, there's a dear young lady, and sit with me a bit. I've got so many questions to ask you that I'm above putting to other folks."

Elinor did as she was told with the passive obedience of a child, Granny's keen eyes regarding her compassionately the while.

"We'll have a cup of tea presently when Kitty comes in from school. She pretends to look after things, but, lor, what can you expect from a bit of a girl like that?" continued the old woman. "I daresay the place is in a nice muck and muddle. It was tidy enough so long as I could keep about, but now I am as helpless as a log."

"Everything seems to be in nice order," said Elinor, consolingly, "and you are the image of neatness, Mrs. Pengold."

"I never was a sloven," replied Granny, "and I always like to look fresh and clean. I gossiped this cap myself, Miss Elinor, with Kitty to heat the irons for me. But it isn't my best one. I'm keeping that against the time when I shall be laid out in my coffin."

In spite of her sorrow Elinor could not repress a smile at this instance of feminine vanity surviving in extreme old age. Where would you expect to find an old man keeping his best nightcap in reserve for his last equipment?

"I want to know the truth about Mr. Guy," said Granny Pengold, presently. "I've had that diamond robbery dinned into my ears by people till I'm sick and tired of listening to it. The diamonds and the Abbey, too, ought to have been his by right, poor, dear young gentleman. I up and told the Squire he was committing a sin in putting him off without a shilling, and him a lying on his death-bed at the time; but he only threw a pillow at me, and told me to mind my own business. His temper got dreadful towards the last. Miss Elinor, what made him take them? Was he in debt?"

"No, I think not, but he wanted money," rejoined Elinor, vacantly.

"How was it that you of all people helped to get him taken up for the robbery?" inquired the old woman. "They may say what they like, but I'll never believe you did it on purpose."

Elinor hid her face in the bed-clothes, and sobbed convulsively.

"I would far sooner have died," she said, brokenly. "He was disguised, and I did not know what I had done till it was too late to draw back. He would not have taken the diamonds but for me. He wanted money to speculate with, since I had refused to marry him as a poor man. I have been his evil genius all along. I wonder he does not hate me even as I hate myself."

Granny Pengold stroked the bowed head with its wealth of short, wavy brown hair tenderly and compassionately.

"Don't say such bitter things, dearie," she replied, gently. "There is no hatred in his heart for you, nothing but love. Why, I mind the days when, as boy and girl, you were always together, and a very pretty pair you made. Poor Mr. Guy! It's taken a load off me to know you didn't point him out to the police wilfully, only through believing it to be somebody else. Clifford Dacre ought to stop the prosecution; he never expected at one time to step into his uncle's shoes. Mr. Guy was always the favourite till he refused to marry Miss Barclay, and crossed the squire's stony

will. I believe at the last the old man felt sorry that he had beggared his sister's son. He tried hard to make Mr. Guy understand something when he arrived an hour or two before the Squire's death. But paralysis had tied his tongue, and he died, leaving the estate to that [Clifford Dacre that I can't abear. It almost breaks my old heart to think of Mr. Guy in prison."

Elinor sprang up quickly from her kneeling posture.

"Let us talk about anything else," she said, wildly, "or my mind will give way. I dare not dwell upon his unhappy position, or look into the future, so dark and threatening, that awaits us both."

"The darkest hour comes just before the dawn," rejoined Granny Pengold, consolingly. "I pray that it may be so in your case, Miss Elinor. Heaven's ways are not our ways, remember, and He can open a door in what looks to us like a blank wall. One reason why I wanted to see you is, I've got a little present for you. I'm going to give you the apostle spoons that belonged to my mother before me."

"Oh, Mrs. Pengold, I cannot rob you of your cherished heirlooms."

"But I want you to have them," persisted Granny. "You'll value them, whereas my married niece would give them to the children to play with, as like as not. I shan't be here much longer, and then you'll have something to recollect me by. They're in the bureau. Perhaps you'll be kind enough to open it and get them out."

Elinor turned to the large old-fashioned mahogany bureau that stood in one corner of the room. It had bright brass handles to its many drawers, while the sloping top opened in one piece, revealing a number of smaller drawers within.

"What a quaint, delightful old thing!" she exclaimed. "Some people would give almost any money to obtain it."

"It belonged to Squire Belmont," replied Granny Pengold. "It used to stand by his bedside. He could make a desk of it by pulling out two little supports and opening the top. After he was paralysed he was always pointing to it and a muttering, as if he wanted me to look in it. I took all the drawers out one by one and carried them to him; but he shook his head nearly off to show me that wasn't what he wanted. I put it down to his being light-headed, and took no more notice of the pointings and mutterings. When he died I made bold to ask for the old bureau, and I got it. Otherwise it would only have been bundled away to make room for new furniture. You'll find the apostle spoons in the third drawer to the right hand, Miss Elinor."

Elinor opened the slanting top and looked in the direction indicated for the spoons. She found them carefully wrapped in paper—four large, flat-bowled, silver spoons—each handle surmounted by a beautifully designed apostolic figure, calculated to make the heart of a collector dance with joy.

In attempting to close the drawer again Elinor found it stiff, and unyielding. She had to use some force. It yielded suddenly, and went in with a bang, causing an hitherto unseen aperture to fly open.

A piece of parchment had been concealed behind it. Almost mechanically Elinor opened it and read the contents.

"Can't you find them apostle spoons?" demanded Granny Pengold, tartly. Elinor's back was towards her, and she could not see what was going on at the bureau. "They must be there, for I put 'em away myself. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are in tissue paper."

Elinor made no reply; a shiver of pain or rapture thrilled through her from head to foot as she went on reading.

"Miss Elinor," cried the old woman, "why don't you say something? Are you ill?"

The appealing, frightened tone caused Elinor to turn round with the parchment

still in her hand. As the wintry sunlight fell upon her face Granny Pengold uttered an expression of astonishment, while Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John fell with a little unheeded clatter upon the floor.

(To be continued.)

THE BIRTH OF AN ICEBERG.

The birth of a huge iceberg, a phenomenon that has been seen only once or twice by a European, and to a certain extent has remained a matter of theory, was observed by the Danish explorers on the east coast of Greenland last summer. The bergs are formed by breaking off from the end of glaciers extending from the perpetual ice of the unexplored interior to the coast and into the sea. The water buoys up the sea end of the glacier until it breaks by its own weight with a noise that sounds like loud thunder miles away. The commotion of the water, as the iceberg turns over and over in the effort to attain its balance, is felt to a great distance along the coast. The natives regard it as the work of evil spirits, and believe that to look upon the glacier in its throes is death. The Danish officers, when observing the breaking off of the end of the great glacier Pissortok through their telescopes, were roughly ordered by their Esquimaux escort, usually submissive enough, to follow their example and turn their backs on the interesting scene. They had happily completed their observations, and avoided an embarrassing conflict with their crew by a seeming compliance with the order.

A CHINESE NOTION.

THE Chinese, so far as can be learned from history, are the oldest nation on the earth. They are, to us of extreme modern ideas, a strange people, and some of their ways and fancies are not to be explained.

The most painstaking scholars and antiquarians appear to have failed, in many particulars, to discover the motives that actuate the individuals of this prehistoric race. Yet, doubtless, the ceremonies that we see them going through in mining camps on the Pacific coast are all to them so full of meaning as the rites of modern religion are to the believers in Christianity.

The Chinese, in some respects, are not unlike the army of the orthodox in the church militant, who believe in a personal life of the present human frame in the world beyond.

The Chinese custom of decapitating their enemies slain in war is explained by the statement that they believe that the appearance of a person in the spirit world without a head is *prima facie* evidence of having committed some crime, and punishment is awarded accordingly.

Hence, the horrible mutilation which took place on the evacuation of Shanghai by the Taepings, when the imperial officers gave orders for the decapitation of every rebel body; and even the coffins containing the remains of prominent rebel leaders were broken open and dishonoured to insure their punishment hereafter.

Hence, also, the anxiety displayed by the friends of officers who lost their heads during the rebellion to recover them and stitch them on to the bodies again, as much as one hundred and thirty-three pounds having been paid by the officers of the imperial army for the head of a friend.

EGOTISM is more like an offence than a crime; though 'tis allowable to speak of yourself provided nothing is advanced in favour; but one cannot help suspecting that those who abuse themselves are, in reality, angling for approbation.

LET us beware of losing our enthusiasm. Let us ever glory in something, and strive to retain our admiration for all that would ennoble and our interest in all that would enrich and beautify our life.

SING ME A SONG OF THE OLDEN TIME.

SING me a song of the olden time—
 "Highland Laddie" and "Bonnie Doon;"
 Sing to me now in the fading light,
 For my heart goes back to my youth to-night—
 Sing me some dear old tune.

And I will dream as I hear your voice,
 Sweet, and tender, and strong, and clear,
 Like your mother's voice, when these songs
 she sung,
 Long ago when we both were young—
 You are so like her, dear.

Take down her harp and touch the strings;
 Too long, too long have they silent been;
 My heart has been full of hurry and strife,
 And the care and worry of active life—
 I long for the songs again.

Sing "Ye Banks and Braes of Bonnie Doon;"
 Your mother sang that song to you
 While she rocked you there on her breast to
 sleep;
 Dear little daughter, do not weep—
 Sing me the old songs, too.

Sing "Logan Water" and "Land o' the Leal,"
 "Annie Laurie" and "Banks o' Dee;"
 Dear old songs that we never forget;
 Over my heart they are echoing yet;
 She sang them all to me.

No music ever so sweet can be
 As the tuneful lays of the days of yore,
 Sung by mother and sister and wife;
 And now, my child, in this later life
 I would hear those songs once more.

So sing me a song of the olden time—
 "Highland Laddie" or Bonnie Doon."
 Sing to me now in the fading light,
 For my heart goes back to my youth to-night—
 Sing me some dear old tune.

A. K.

DOLLY'S LEGACY.

CHAPTER XII.

It was a very stormy interview between Paul Clifford and the pair who, for ten long years, had borne the title of Earl and Countess of Desmond. Mr. Clifford had never liked them, he had too much cause to do otherwise; and now he did not attempt to smooth matters over or soften the blow his news must be to them. He told them very briefly he had ample proofs; the young lady who had resided with them as Miss Smith was his late friend's child and his own ward.

"That's nonsense," said Matilda, who, seeing that her lord was utterly craven, took the task of answering the challenge on herself. This was when she had recovered from her swoon, and Mr. Clifford had been readmitted to an interview. "You can't have proofs; a mere likeness counts for nothing."

Paul knew perfectly well that of legal proofs at present he had none, but he was so sure of the moral justice of his claim that he never let this appear.

"Listen, Lady Desmond; for the present I will continue to address you by the title you have usurped so long. If you had no guilty secret on your conscience would you swoon at a mere question? I tell you it is my belief you are fully aware of my ward's identity, and that you have lately sent her away; that, not content with having wronged her all these years, you are going to blight her life as thoroughly, if more secretly, than you blighted her mother's."

"Perhaps you'd like to say I murdered her," said the Countess, with an ironical laugh; "don't study my feelings, pray."

"I believe that even you would shrink from such a crime. I think that you are keeping the girl in hiding."

Lady Desmond's face blanched, but she would not give in.

"She was no child; it would be difficult to 'hide' a girl of seventeen," she said, scornfully. "You have your ways and means," he answered, coldly; "but I tell you once for all you will fail."

"In what?"

"In your attempt to defraud the orphan. Remember, Lady Desmond, circumstances are not what they were seventeen years ago; then you had to deal with a timid, sensitive girl, whose tender heart you broke, whom you drove to desperation by your taunts; now you have to answer to a man of the world, competent to see through your artifices. I stand here to-day as the guardian of the late Earl's daughter, and I swear to you that, dead or alive I will discover her. Think well before you oppose me, the right must out in time. Sooner or later I shall install my ward as mistress of Field Royal. Would it not be better for you to come to terms with me? Remember, it will be in my power to demand the back rents for ten years; that means a hundred thousand pounds, without adding interest and compound interest."

For one moment Lady Desmond's black, bead-like eyes quailed beneath his glance; for one moment she seemed in doubt, and telegraphed a silent inquiry to her husband, but he was conveniently obtuse and turned away his head. Although the Earl was present throughout the interview, everything went on as though it had been a *l'été-à-été* between his wife and Mr. Clifford. Lord Desmond took no more part in the discussion than if he had been a lay figure.

Matilda hesitated for one moment, then her eyes rested on a photograph of her son, hung over the writing-table. She remembered his whole future was at stake; that thought gave her courage.

"I defy you to do your worst," she said, fiercely; "my brother-in-law left no children. The girl you would make mistress of Field Royal is a thief and adventuress. You may find her, but the only house in Northshire of which she can be mistress is your own; she shall never cross these doors, even if you change her from a nameless outcast to Mrs. Clifford."

The taunt fell harmlessly; Paul naturally smiled at it, but it made him give the lady a piece of news he had meant to spare her.

"There will never be a Mrs. Clifford in my lifetime," he answered, cheerfully; "but the future mistress of the Court, my affianced wife, the Lady Madeleine Charteris, has promised to welcome my ward as a friend and sister."

Lady Desmond would have liked to shake him as he stood. Not content with bringing forward an adventuress to claim her boy's inheritance, he actually despoiled Jack of his *fiancée*.

"Won't you congratulate me?" asked Mr. Clifford, provokingly calm. "You know I shall be your nephew."

"You are old enough to be Madeleine's father," said my lady, thinking of the most spiteful remark she could imagine.

"We have agreed that does not signify; but I am not here to talk of my own concerns. Once more, will you help me in my search for Dorothea?"

"No."

"It must be peace or war between us. Which is it to be?"

"War to the knife!"

"So be it," said Clifford, resolutely. "The search may be long and tedious, but I shall be rewarded at last. Lady Desmond, when the rightful mistress of Field Royal enters her father's castle, you will regret your words and actions of to-day from your very heart."

"I scorn your threats!" said Lady Desmond, coldly. "If you have nothing more to

say we had better end this interview. I can assure you I find it a disagreeable one."

He bowed, and withdrew without another word. When he was gone the Countess sank exhausted upon a chair. Lord Desmond paced the room with hasty strides.

"It's no use, Mattie," he said at last, looking and speaking like a man who has lost all hope and spirits. "I give up the game; sooner or later we shall have to give up Field Royal."

"Never! Only trust to me. I will save my son's inheritance at any cost."

Lord Desmond sighed.

"I don't ask what you've done," he said, dejectedly. "I'd rather not know; but, Mattie, I can't help feeling we're on the wrong road. It's too late now to turn back. We've defied Clifford and left him to do his worst; but it seems to me if we'd given up everything they'd have been bound to do something for us, and, anyway, I should have been spared the awful suspense I've got to bear now."

"Courage!" whispered his wife. "Think of our children; anything is better than defeat."

Meanwhile Paul Clifford received an unexpected ally. He had hardly left Field Royal behind him when a girl came running towards him, and, noticing her evident eagerness, he stopped on a curve of the winding path leading to the lodge, and waited till she came up with flushed cheeks and breathless haste.

"Oh, sir!" she panted, "I thought I'd never catch you!"

"I am here now," said Paul, good-naturedly. "How can I help you? I am sure you are someone I ought to know; you have a Northshire face."

"I'm Mrs. Bean's 'Melie, sir; and, please, James told me you'd come about Miss Smith."

"I have, indeed. Can you give me any news of her, do you think?"

"She never did what they say, sir," said 'Melie, firmly. "Tisn't likely, when she had the bravest gentleman in the land just waiting to marry her, that she'd run away and hide from him. He was down here last night looking wellnigh broken-hearted, and he says—and so does mother—'Wherever Miss Smith is she isn't of her own free will,' and we just think she's shuttled up somewhere, and can't get out."

'Melie spoke so fast and so utterly avoided all stops in her narrative that Paul could not get in a word edgewise, and had to wait patiently until, having exhausted all her breath supply, Miss 'Melie Bean perforce paused in her oration. Then he hastened to ask,—

"She had a lover! Are you quite sure?"

"As sure as if I had seen him propose. It's Lord Asherton, sir—him as used to be plain Mr. Sinclair. Why, he'd fixed up everything. They were to be married down here, and mother was to go to the wedding. When he heard Miss Smith had gone he looked as one struck all on a heap. He says 'he'll find her if it costs his last shilling; and James said you were set on finding her, too, so I thought it'd be doing no harm just to give you his address, and see if you couldn't help each other."

Paul took the address gratefully. He knew Lord Asherton by repute as a brave, chivalrous man, whom any girl might have felt it an honour to call her lover, and yet the fact of Dolly's engagement seemed to add to the mystery which encircled her fate.

She had disappeared two days before she expected her betrothed. However miserable, however uncomfortable she might have been at Field Royal, it would have been more natural to wait until her lover returned.

Paul went to London promptly, and called on Lord Asherton; but one look at the young man's face filled him with dismay.

Herbert was perfectly haggard; his eyes were bloodshot, and had dark rings of purple

beneath them; he was white and thin; his expression one of trouble and anxiety.

A glance at his appearance told you more than a hundred protestations that he loved the missing girl as his own life.

The two men were friends at once. Late as was the hour, they called on Dr. Pemberton and then on Madeleine Charteris, and the result of a conversation between those who were so keenly interested in Dolly was that two of the advertisements seen by Dr. Allen were at once inserted in all the leading papers.

The only answer to either was a short note from Mr. Hurst, of the firm of Hurst and Morley, begging the advertiser to call at his office.

As Herbert and Mr. Clifford each considered himself the advertiser referred to, it ended in their waiting on Mr. Hurst together.

He was a shrewd, middle-aged man, with an earnest, thoughtful face, and both gentlemen were favourably impressed by his manner.

"I may have sent for you on a mistaken idea," he said, simply, "but the mention of an egg given to a young lady in December recalled a very strange business to my mind. One of my clients called here one day late in December and told me she believed a danger threatened a girl, who answers in everything to the one referred to in your advertisement. Mrs. Smith (the name is so common, I need not hide it) said a gentleman had presented her daughter with an egg, and talked of calling on her. She also mentioned the young lady was annoyed by Lord Devereux, and begged my advice in the matter, as I was in some sort the girl's guardian. I told her she had better remove to a distant part of London, and requested I was powerless to help her further, as I had passed my word to the child's true mother not to part with the papers entrusted to my care until the daughter came of age, or was engaged to be married. I always read the advertisements in the agony column, and, I must say, when I saw these two, I became convinced they related to my ward, and I thought they inferred she was in trouble."

But gave one glance at Lord Asherton.

"We had better tell this gentleman all."

And so they confided the whole history of the hapless heroine, as they knew it, to the lawyer. He listened with great attention.

"Now hear the missing links of the story," he said, gravely. "Nearly eighteen years ago, when I was younger and more romantic than I am at present, I found a woman, alone and friendless, in the street; she was wandering about, I really believe, because she knew not where to go."

"We took her in, my wife was captivated by her beauty, and she told us her story."

"Mischievous had been made between her husband and herself; her heart was broken, so she had gone away, and left him to think her dead."

"I talked to her, I persuaded her, my wife begged her, for the sake of her unborn child, to reflect, and let me seek her husband. It was all in vain; she would not even tell us his name."

"Two months later we had settled her in comfortable apartments near us. She had brought with her a few jewels, and some of these, at her request, I disposed of."

"Just before the child came she was joined by a faithful servant, who had known her all her life. In this woman's presence, on an oath of secrecy, she told me her true name. She gave me papers and proofs of her identity, and sent to her husband if she and her baby died. If the child lived the packet was to stay in my charge, unopened, until it attained its majority or became engaged to be married."

"The mother died, the child lived. She was christened Dorothea. I would willingly have watched over her, but the nurse decided there would be less chance of discovery if she lived alone."

"I think she was haunted by a dread the family would discover the child. Perhaps I ought to have communicated with the father,

but, remember, my solemn word had been passed, and a promise to the dead is not to be lightly broken."

"The servant added one or two more papers to those already in my charge, and went away. The only service she would accept from me was an introduction to a jeweller, so that if in great need she might be able to dispose of her lady's trinkets to support the child."

"I lost sight of her utterly and completely until last December. Then, after more than seventeen years, she called here, as I have told you. She said the child was her dead mother's image, and, as her father was dead, it was more than ever necessary to guard her from contact with his family, who would recognise her at once as the rightful owner of the property they enjoyed, and do their best to keep her from ever proving her claim."

"It was so, exactly what they had done that Paul Clifford stated some marvellous foresight must surely have been given to the faithful foster-mother."

"I own, when I read the advertisements, I felt startled," admitted Mr. Hurst. "My first idea was that they were a decoy emanating from the Devereux family, therefore I asked for this visit. The idea that Mrs. Smith could die and leave the child totally unprotected never once occurred to me. She was a peculiar woman, and had an intense, passionate love for the girl. I believe she was jealous of me for having shared the mother's confidence, for she resolutely refused all my offers of friendship to her charge."

The three men kept silence. They were all possessed with the same belief—the Countess of Desmond had got her husband's niece into her power, and was forcibly detaining her. The only question was, where?

Paul Clifford was the first to speak, and he addressed himself to the lawyer.

"You must be used to mysteries and able to read them better than Lord Asherton and myself. Will you tell us frankly your opinion of my ward's disappearance?"

"It will not reassure you."

"We would rather hear it."

"I believe Lady Desmond is keeping her niece in close confinement."

It was only another version of 'Miss's' homely expression, "Miss Smith is shut up somewhere so fast she can't run away." Strange that the skilful lawyer and the country servant-girl should both have hit on the same explanation.

"Do you think she is at Field Royal?"

"No," answered Paul, promptly. "You can't know the house well, Asherton, to suggest such a thing. It would be simply impossible to keep anyone secretly in any of the rooms."

"I was thinking of Lady Desmond's sudden illness," said Herbert, musingly. "If once we admit she is at the bottom of this, all her actions are of moment. Amelia told us she was shut up in her own room from Wednesday night till late on Sunday; that not one of the servants was allowed to enter her rooms, and she was waited on solely by one of her daughters."

The lawyer smiled.

"I can read that riddle for you, Lord Asherton. Probably the Countess was not at Field Royal at all."

Herbert gasped.

"But—"

"Miss Smith was seen to enter the London train; she was seen in it as far as Gloucester; then all clue to her falls. She must have been forcibly removed by some one. The extent of Lady Desmond's illness would be quite sufficient time for her to take possession of her niece, and place her in close confinement."

"With such things as law and justice about?"

"I fear so. You see, if the Countess told a plausible story, and her victim contradicted it at every point, that in itself would be sufficient to suggest the idea of insanity."

"You don't mean that she is in an asylum?"

You can't think any woman would be such a fiend as to shut her up there?"

"I told you you would not like my opinion," returned the lawyer: "but, nevertheless, I adhere to it. Lady Desmond, disguised, entered the train, and, either by drugging opiates, reduced Miss Smith to helplessness. The last was easy."

The memory of the one young lady the porter had seen at Paddington, the girl who had been carried helpless from the train to a carriage, occurred to Herbert. He related it to the others. The solicitor just nodded. Evidently he regarded it as proving his theory.

"But we can't search all the asylums in England!" said Lord Asherton, sadly, "the wouldn't let us."

"Will you take my advice?" asked My Hurst. "It won't be palatable, but I think it is sound."

"What is it?"

"Do nothing."

"Nothing!"

"Repeat the advertisement with another which I will draw up, but do nothing else."

"And leave my darling to her fate?" cried Herbert, passionately. "Never!"

Mr. Hurst bore with him wonderfully. Perhaps he remembered Dolly's mother, and knew what influence her daughter's beauty would have over her lover.

"It would be doing her a cruel kindness to provoke Lady Desmond to desperate measures. If she grew to think you were on the track she might convey her niece abroad or to even a worse fate; but if you keep quiet I'll set a watch on my lady's movements—the letters she writes, the money she pays away. Depend upon it, Lord Asherton, that is the safest plan."

They went away much encouraged by the interview, only sad to think of what Dolly might suffer during the "waiting" imposed by Mr. Hurst.

"It will all come right," said Mr. Clifford, who was, perhaps, naturally, the more cheerful of the two. "We shall be able to have a double wedding, Asherton, before many months have passed."

Herbert groaned.

"I can't feel hopeful," he said, wearily. "I have a presentiment of evil. I seem to feel that, even if I find her, something will part us again."

"Nonsense!" said Clifford, decidedly.

"You've got morbid by thinking over this affair. Why, when you are married you'll laugh over your gloomy prognostications."

There was nothing much like a laugh on Herbert's lips just then.

"You don't understand," he said, hoarsely.

"I once meditated doing her a great wrong. Heaven knows I loved her even then, but yet I regard our parting as my punishment."

"You are too fanciful. You only saw her in March; you were contemplating marriage in May. How could you have meant to wrong her?"

Herbert turned white as death.

"I had better tell you," he said, hoarsely, "the memory of it is torturing me. I think I loved her the moment I saw her, and I yielded to the love. I knew I should bring her sorrow, and yet I yielded."

"My dear fellow, your love would bring no woman sorrow. Apart from rank and fortune, any true woman would be proud to win your heart."

Herbert shook his head.

"When I first spoke of love to her—I could have given her nothing else. Don't you understand? Why make me say it more plainly? Though we had been married in church with book and ring she would have had no right to bear my name."

"What can you mean?"

"Only this, that somewhere in the wilderness of London life there was an outpost, whom pure women would have shunned—aye, and drawn away their skirts in passing her lest they should touch her and be polluted—"

yet while this creature lived my little child, my innocent Dolly, could not have been my wife."

Paul wrung his hand. He could understand a little of what Herbert's temptation had been.

"I am sure she never knew."

"She! Do you think I could have told her? I asked her once if she could be content though all the world frowned on us. She said content and happy, too, so that she had my love. I was in a hard strait, but I could not bring myself to give her up, so I went to London to prepare for the marriage that should yet make her my wife."

"You are going to tell her now?"

"Yes. While I was in London an envelope reached me, just a common, blue envelope such as bills are sent in. I almost passed it over, thinking it of no account—it brought my freedom."

"Freedom!"

"Yes, the certificate of my wife's death. Clifford, you are a good man; tell me, was I a villain that the only feeling I could be sensible of at the news was one of deep thankfulness. I had no pity for one dead, nothing but intense joy for myself and for my darling."

"And then?"

"You know the rest; how, rejoicing as I think men never rejoiced before, I rushed down to Northshire to find her gone. Can you wonder now that I despair of our ever being husband and wife?"

Paul Clifford did not wonder in the least; he spoke soothingly to Lord Asherton. Other men might have blamed him, but Paul had suffered too much himself from a hopeless love to be hard on one whose intended sin had sprung from such a cause.

"We can only be patient," he said, simply.

"I know it is hard work, but think how much we have achieved already? Every proof of my ward's parentage is now ready to our hands. Only a week after her recovery we shall be enabled to introduce her to the world as Lady Desmond of Field Royal."

"She is not recovered yet," said Herbert, gloomily.

He never seemed to share the hopes which Paul and Lady Madeleine entertained; and so, perhaps, the surprise was greater to him than any of the others when Mr. Hurst brought Dr. Allen to Lord Charteris's mansion to tell to others the story which had burst upon him that morning in his private office.

It chanced that both Mr. Clifford and Lord Asherton were luncheon with the Earl, so that all those who took most interest in Dolly were gathered in the library to listen to Dr. Allen.

"Thank Heaven!" was Paul's exclamation, "that you took her in! Think of my darling's fate if she had fallen into the hands of unscrupulous persons!"

Douglas sighed.

"It is the only mistake that has happened at Powis Hall since I conducted the establishment; but yet, when I see the joy on your faces, I can't regret that I consented to receive Mrs. Dell's daughter."

"Who is Mrs. Dell?"

It was Lord Charteris who asked the question; no one answered it, and Herbert adroitly changed the conversation. Not for worlds would he have let the generous, warm-hearted Earl discover that the woman whose conduct had been a disgrace to her womanhood was the only sister of his dear, dead wife.

"Of course you will go down with me to Powis Hall," said Dr. Allen, "and remove my patient? If Mrs. Dell is troublesome when she discovers her dose I shall tell her it is a case of mistaken identity, and that the young lady has been identified as a missing heiress."

"Couldn't we go to-night?" asked Paul.

"And reach Fordham about five, with no conveyance to take us the seven miles beyond to Powis Hall? No, I think it would be better to wait till to-morrow. I shall write to my sister to expect us."

"And Dolly, shall you tell her?" asked

Lord Asherton, with an anxiety he could not hide.

"She knows nothing of the advertisements or my errand in London," answered Dr. Allen, promptly. "I judged it best to save her all suspense; she will be told nothing until she sees your lordship, when I fancy you will like to take the task of communication upon yourself."

The others smiled pleasantly; there was no answering smile on Herbert's face. In spite of the news his betrothed was found; in spite of the certainty that within four-and-twenty hours he would hold her in his arms, he was grave, and almost melancholy in expression. No one could possibly have guessed the desire of his heart had just been granted him.

Paul Clifford understood his feeling better than any of the others. He talked about his ward to Dr. Allen, just because he thought hearing of her was the best solace for the lover's fears.

"And Dolly has been with you ever since she left Field Royal?"

"There is an interval of forty-eight hours unaccounted for," said the doctor, quietly; "this time I imagine was occupied in the medical examination. I was telegraphed to on Tuesday, and I sent my assistant to escort the supposed patient to Powis Hall."

"Surely he suspected the truth?"

"He suspected nothing; your ward conceived a very strong prejudice against him, which, possibly, blinded him. I sent a lady to meet them at Fordham, and from the very first she asserted that only some cruel mistake could have made Miss Dell our inmate."

"I should like to see her," breathed Lord Asherton; "I should like to thank her."

"You can do both; she is at present assisting us at Powis Hall."

"As a keeper?"

"As a dear and valued friend. My acquaintance with Mrs. Bertram has been a short one, but I have the most implicit confidence in her. She seemed to understand Miss Dell from the first as no one else could. I like to make the lives of my poor, afflicted patients as happy as I can. When I saw the girl's dread of mingling with her fellow-sufferers I at once allowed her to keep herself apart, with Mrs. Bertram as her companion."

Herbert started. He was thinking of Dr. Murray's letter, telling him his dead wife had been nursed with the tenderest devotion by Mrs. Bertram, and that the same lady had defrayed all the expenses of her illness and funeral. Could this good Samaritan possibly be the lady referred to by Dr. Allen as ministering to Dolly? He guessed as much.

"I have some knowledge of a Mrs. Bertram," he said, quickly, "a woman full of good deeds. Doctor, you must let me see her."

Dr. Allen smiled.

"I will leave that to yourself and your fiancée. Mrs. Bertram has known many sorrows, but they have left her with a warm, tender sympathy for others. She is a general favourite at Powis Hall."

"Is she young?"

This question came, of course, from Lady Madeleine. She had been very silent hitherto, but the description of Mrs. Bertram had excited her curiosity.

"She is under thirty."

"And pretty?"

"She has been lovely once; to my mind she is lovely still, but it is not a happy face, my lady."

"How could a widow be happy?" asked Madeleine, simply.

The physician had never said Mrs. Bertram was a widow, but he did not remind the young lady of this; instead, he rose to take his leave after it had been settled that the four persons present should meet him at the railway station the next day and accompany him to Powis Hall.

Mr. Hurst could not be of the party; besides, as the visit was more to fetch Dolly than to prove her parentage, his absence could matter little.

Lord Charteris and his daughter must go, since it was to their home the heiress would come as a guest.

Paul Clifford's claim to join them was that as her lawful guardian he could best formally claim the girl from Dr. Allen's custody, while Herbert's right no one questioned, since in all the world he was soon to be nearest and dearest to the pretty fair-haired girl who had gone through such dire sorrow.

"I am so glad!"

This was when all the excitement was over, and Madeleine Charteris stood alone in her boudoir with her lover, bidding him good-night.

"And I, too," he answered, fondly. "Elaine, you cannot guess how heavily that child's fate has lain upon me."

He often called her Elaine; it was his pet name for her. Little doubt that these two would be happy, in spite of the years between them.

"It will end just like a fairy tale," said the heiress, gently. "They will both live happy ever afterwards. Only, Paul, one thing puzzles me."

"What is it, dear?"

"Lord Asherton looks so miserable; it is more as if he had lost Dolly than found her."

Paul sighed.

"Herbert has seen much trouble, and his is not a hopeful nature. I think even now he fears something will divide him from his darling. He will never be quite contented until their union is a fact, and Dolly wears a plain gold ring upon her finger."

"I am sure he loves her."

"Dear! It is his very love makes him so ready to fear the losing her."

"But he can't lose her really, can he, Paul?"

"It seems impossible, child. I assure you I have no intention of playing the part of the austere guardian, and parting them."

Lady Madeleine smiled.

"I hope she will like her."

"She won't be able to help it; she is such a fairy, child-like creature. Elaine, you won't be able to realise a bit that she is to be a duchess."

"You forget—I have seen her."

"Ah! I had forgotten. It reads like a romance, doesn't it, Elaine? A girl who is a countess in her own right singing in the streets for alms!"

"We must help her to forget it," whispered his sweet-faced love.

Meanwhile, the following morning all was expectation and excitement at Powis Hall. The post brought Miss Jemima the grand news.

Differing widely from her brother, and believing joy cannot come too soon, she determined not to leave the supposed Miss Dell in her doubts any longer.

Directly after breakfast she went in search of her, and found her in the blue room with Mrs. Bertram.

"My dear," she said, taking Dolly's slim, white hand in hers, "I have good news for you. The truth has come to light. My brother writes he is convinced of your sanity, and will restore you this very day to your friends."

The sweet eyes were full of tears.

"Is it a dream?" she faltered.

"It is sober, serious, earnest," returned Miss Jemima. "Lord Asherton will be here this afternoon, and he brings with him the Lady Madeleine Charteris, whose father begs that you will make his house your home until you are a happy bride."

Dolly clasped her hand, and raised it to her lips.

"Are you quite sure?" she whispered. "Oh! don't let me believe it if it is not true! I couldn't bear to be disappointed again!"

"It is quite true."

Still Dolly faltered.

"And shall I really belong to Bertie? Won't people try to part us again?"



[MAGDALEN FELL AT MISS JEMIMA'S FEET, AND CLASPED HER HANDS.]

Miss Jemima understood the nervous dread which prompted the words.

"My dear, no one in the world can part you from Lord Asherton. In a brief space of time you will be his much-loved wife."

Dolly shivered.

"His parents," she breathed; "won't they try to part us?"

"I shall lose patience with you directly, child," said the spinster, good-temperedly. "I assure you once more nothing in the world can part you from your lover, unless, from any mysterious place, there appeared upon the scene anyone who could prove you to have a husband or Lord Asherton a wife."

Dolly smiled quite happily.

"That is quite impossible. Then I may be happy now? Oh! Miss Jemima, you don't know what I have suffered!"

She left the room; for the first time Miss Jemima had leisure to observe Magdalen, white as sculptured marble, trembling from head to foot. She saw at once something must have happened to disturb her favourite.

"What is the matter, dear?" she asked, gently. "Are you feeling ill?"

Mrs. Bertram shook her head.

"Something must be troubling you. Why, I expected you to be all joy at your friend's happiness."

Magdalen clung to her.

"Is it true?"

"My dear, have you caught Dolly's nervousness?"

"It is not that. Miss Jemima, you will not betray me? I am in trouble. Your words have raised an awful fear. Tell me, were they true?"

"Which words? Speak freely, dear. Don't you know I would give anything to serve you? We have not known each other long, counting by weeks and months, but the moment I saw your face I loved you. I will serve you as tenderly as though I were your sister."

Magdalen's voice came in a hoarse, strained whisper, each word broken by a sob,—

"You told her—Dolly—she would be Lord Asherton's wife unless—unless—"

"Unless he had a living wife already, my dear. I never dreamed of such a thing. I just mentioned it as the most impossible thing, and as being the one sole chance that could come between such lovers."

"But if it were so; if—"

"You are frightening me," said the elder woman, gently. "Dear, be frank with me for all our sakes."

"If Lord Asherton had a living wife," breathed Magdalen, "a wife whom he and all the world believed dead, who would never trouble him, never let him even learn she did not sleep in her quiet grave, surely—surely, if no one knew, if the wife were content to be as one dead, to keep her identity a secret from the whole world, surely then, just the fact that she lived could not injure Dolly—and her husband?"

"My dear, I don't know what you mean. If Lord Asherton has a living wife, even if her existence were never suspected, if for years the truth were hidden it would not alter facts. That innocent girl who has just left us could not be his wife though she wore his wedding-ring and shared his title. She would yet be what I cannot name to you; and her babies if Heaven sent her any, must be nobody's children."

Magdalen trembled from head to foot. An awful suspicion of the truth came to Miss Jemima.

"You cannot be speaking merely from fancy," she cried, suddenly. "There must be some meaning in your words; for Heaven's sake explain them."

But Magdalen fell at her feet and clasped her hands.

"Tell me," asked the beautiful outcast, "tell me which is right. They love each other better than life itself; their whole future would

be wrecked if they were parted. Surely it would be more merciful to let them marry?"

"If they could be parted their marriage would be no true marriage. Better let that child have a bitter heartache than live to lose all women hold most dear. But I hope, I pray, you are mistaken. How can you know of anything to separate two such faithful hearts as Dolly's and Lord Asherton's?"

Magdalen knelt on, Miss Jemima's hand yet clasped in hers, her tears falling fast upon it.

"You will keep my secret?"

"I have promised you. Have no fear, my poor dear, only tell me what barrier you fancy exists between Lord Asherton and the pretty child you loved so well?"

And from the poor, forsaken outcast came the sad, short answer,—

"I am his wife!"

(To be continued.)

NAPKINS AT LUNCHEON.

ENGLISHMEN resent any attempt to introduce social changes; and show touchiness if the attempt implies any reproach. It is not the custom in England to use napkins at luncheon, although that meal is often a small dinner. An anecdote, told by Richard Grant White, shows how tenaciously this little social custom is adhered to. An American lady was visiting at the house of a duchess, where she found the usual absence of napkins at midday. Knowing her hostess well, she asked why napkins were not used at luncheon.

"It is not the custom," answered her grace, with an air which signified that that settled the question.

As the lady had found napkins at Balmoral, when she lunched with the Queen, she told her friend so.

"Indeed!" replied the duchess. "The Queen had better be careful. She will make herself unpopular if she undertakes to change our old customs."



["WHO ARE YOU?" REPEATED ALIDA, WITH A TERRIBLE FEAR AT HER HEART.]

NOVELETTE.]

DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR.

—20—

CHAPTER I.

"THIS horrible sum! I've done it five times, and it won't come right," exclaimed a girl of about ten, peevishly, and looking very much inclined to cry. "What's the good of arithmetic? I'm sure I think it's nothing but a bore."

"Yes, a beastly bore," chimed in her young brother, aged eight. "I like drawing engines, and ships, and trains, but sums is beastly," he concluded, emphatically, without any regard to grammar or elegance of speech.

"Bertie, dear, what a vulgar word to use," said a pale, weary-looking girl of about twenty, lifting her head from the exercise she was correcting, and looking at him reproachfully; "where did you hear it?"

"Jimmy Brown says it, and lots of other words besides; he told me he was going to *nick* some of the geraniums out of the little front gardens, and wants me to help him."

"To *nick* them?" repeated his sister, puzzled.

"Yes, steal them, don't you know," the boy exclaimed, triumphantly.

"Oh! Bertie, how wicked! You must never go with Jimmy Brown again. Why, dear, do you not understand that stealing is very wrong? If you were to take the plants you would be put in prison. Promise me you will have nothing more to do with such a naughty boy."

"Why, Alida?" he exclaimed, somewhat crestfallen at her reproof. "Jimmy says there's nothing wrong about it if we don't get found out."

"Jimmy is a worse boy than I thought he was; indeed, dear, he is no fit companion for

you. Promise me you will not speak to him again."

"Only once, Alida," pleaded the boy; "let me speak to him once, and I will tell him what you say."

"Very well, Bertie," she said, quietly. "I know you will keep your promise. You may speak to him once to tell him you will have nothing more to do with him. Now, Grace," turning to the younger girl, "let me see if we cannot conquer this stubborn sum together."

In a very short space of time the faulty addition was set right, and Bertie's spelling-lesson was heard.

"That will do for to-day, children," Alida said, somewhat wearily, "my head aches with the heat. As mother is out, shall we go for a walk?"

"Oh! yes, yes!" chorussed both children, eagerly; "you don't often come with us."

"Because I have not much time, dears; however, run away now, and put on your hats while I tidy up the room."

A hard life indeed was Alida Palairot's, very different from what she had been accustomed to in her youth, yet a word of complaint never passed her lips.

The only child of rich parents, everything that money could purchase or affection lavish had been hers during her early childhood, but her mother died suddenly, and from that time everything seemed to have gone wrong with the Palairots.

Her father cared for nothing, let everything go from bad to worse, and finally married a woman much below him in station.

Even this did not arrest his downward course. He changed his name and lived in hiding for some years, and then a terrible blow fell upon them, which was worse than all that had gone before. This was shortly followed by her father's death; and terrible as it may seem to say so, it was a relief to both wife and daughter that he was snatched away before more disgrace could fall upon them.

Alida rose to the occasion with wonderful courage for one so young.

She persuaded her stepmother to resume their rightful name, and remove far from the scene of their disgrace; and the elder woman yielded blindly to the girl's stronger will.

It was Alida who took the poor lodgings, and managed to keep them neat and clean.

It was Alida who taught her half-sister and brother, who cooked and mended for them, who eked out their scanty income by teaching the tradespeople's dull daughters the difference between sharps and flats; and it was Alida who kept her stepmother from desponding, and urged her to get work, for she was a very fair dressmaker, having been in one of the large London warehouses before Mr. Palairot saw and married her.

With it all Alida never uttered a murmur against her hard fate; but the colour faded from her face, the roundness from her cheek, and the light from her eyes, leaving her pale and fragile-looking, though nothing could destroy the clear contour of her features or her grace of form.

If during the oppressive heat she longed for the cool sea breezes or the soft green of feathery fern and waving grass, the murmur of brooklets, the song of feathered tribes free as the air, not caged in tiny prisons, or the drowsy, soothing hum of insect life, she kept her longings to herself, and bravely trod the path that stretched before her, strewed with thorns though it was.

She had hardly finished putting away the tattered school-books when the children burst into the room with their shabby hats on.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Bertie, joyously; "but you're not ready; make haste, do, there's a brick."

Alida shook her head at him as he squeezed and hugged her, but she would not damp his high spirits by reproving him.

"Sorrow and care come soon enough," she thought, sadly; "let him enjoy life while he can."

Soon they were, out walking on the dusty pavement in the scorching sunshine.

Grace kept soberly along by her sister's side; but Bertie darted hither and thither, regardless of the heat, chasing a solitary white butterfly, which by some mistake had roamed into the narrow, dusty streets in its search for green fields and brilliant flowers.

So absorbed was the child in his chase that he ran into the road after the insect, which fluttered provokingly before him just out of his reach, several times, heedless of Alida's admonitions about his safety.

Just as he thought he had secured the prize a van drawn by two horses was driven sharply round a corner, and before Alida could spring forward to save him, Bertie was down among the horses' feet.

With an agonised cry Alida covered her face with her hands to shut out the horrible sight.

The blood receded from her heart, leaving her dizzy and faint.

In a second several thoughts flashed over her. How could she face his mother, and tell her the fate of the bright, beautiful boy she loved so well? How could she return with his mangled, bleeding corpse in place of the healthy, blooming child? Why had she brought him out only to find his death?

She was suddenly reassured from her gloomy forebodings by a strange voice addressing her.

"This has been a severe shock to you, I am afraid; but there is no further cause for alarm. The little fellow is more frightened than hurt I think."

Alida opened her eyes with a gasp. There, in front of her stood a gentleman, his light grey suit splashed and stained with mud from the freshly-watered road, holding in his arms Bertie—Bertie, dragged and dirty, but apparently unharmed.

The revulsion of feeling was great.

"Thank Heaven!" she cried, fervently.

"And the gentleman, too," cried Bertie, who seemed in no hurry to get down from his resting-place in the strong arms which held him as carefully and gently as a woman's.

"The gentleman?" stammered Alida.

"Yes," responded Bertie, rather indignantly. "Didn't you see, I should have been rounded over but for him; he caught the horse's heads. I say," he continued, turning to his rescuer with the familiarity of childhood, "what's your name?"

"Percival Ronayne," answered the gentleman, promptly, smiling down into the pretty, dirty face scanning his so scrutinizingly.

"I like you," the boy announced, at the end of his scrutiny. "Will you be my friend, and may I call you Percy?"

"Most willingly I answer yes to both questions," said Mr. Ronayne, setting him on his feet, when the child clung tightly to the hand which had rescued him from the trampling hoofs of the horses.

"How can I thank you for what you have done?" said Alida, turning to him with her gratitude plainly visible in her dark eyes.

"Believe me I am more than repaid by being able to restore him to you unhurt, though I fear his clothes have rather suffered," replied Mr. Ronayne, letting his eyes dwell upon her pale face, and thinking, despite its want of colour, how fair it was.

"So have yours," announced Bertie, unconcernedly, "you're all covered with mud!"

"We are rowing in the same boat, then," he returned, gaily, "for, my little friend, you do not look particularly clean."

"I shall go home and get mother to wash me; but I say," lowering his voice and speaking confidentially, "you'll come too."

"If—if you—" began Mr. Ronayne, looking doubtfully towards Alida.

"She's my sister; she won't object, she's a trump," Bertie declared, intent upon having his own way.

"Will you allow me to see you home? You are still looking very pale," he asked, cour-

teously of the fragile girl, who looked so graceful in her shabby attire.

"I am afraid you will think Bertie very forward," she said, hesitatingly.

"I think he is a very nice little chap, indeed," he responded, as they turned their way homewards. "Has he not promised to be my friend?"

A promise the child kept by keeping tight hold of his hand the whole way to their humble dwelling, regardless of the pickle he was in.

Here Mr. Ronayne would have left them, but Bertie insisted that his new friend must come and see his mother, who was certain to be at home now.

Alida looked embarrassed. She could see that the stranger was evidently accustomed to a very different style of living from theirs, and she hardly liked to expose the poverty of their abode.

He saw her hesitation, and guessed the cause.

"Somewhat time, little one"—this to Bertie. Then to her, "you are safe now, and I will leave you, Miss—"

"Palairat," she said quietly, little thinking the effect the name would have upon the stranger.

"Palairat," he repeated, astonished; "are you the daughter of my old friend?"

"My father's name was Morton," she said, wondering slightly.

"Morton Palairat, of Dinglethorpe?"

"Yes."

"Then it is the same. You must be the little Alida who used to ride upon my shoulder, let me see, nearly eighteen years ago! I daresay you would not remember me; you were a more baby then. I went to India, and when I returned several years afterwards all trace of my old friends had vanished. I am glad, indeed, to have met you now."

Alida's face flushed painfully at this mention of her father.

"My father—that is, we became poor," she murmured low.

"Ah! I heard something about it after your mother's death; but tell me, is my old friend still alive? I have never been able to find out."

"He is dead," she said, slowly.

"Dead!" he ejaculated. "Poor Morton."

"After my mother's death my father married again," she went on, in low tones; "my stepmother is not quite a lady."

"Ah!" he interpolated, looking at her pityingly.

"But," she added quickly, seeing that he was likely to put a wrong interpretation on her speech, "she is very good to me, and I am fond of her."

"Are you coming in?" bawled Bertie from the top of the stairs at this juncture. "Gracie, make them come up; mother's home."

Grace was too bashful to obey this imperious order; she only raised big, wondering eyes to the stranger's face.

"I will come in for a few minutes, as your brother seems to wish it so much," the latter said.

Alida made no opposition, but mounted the stairs towards their tiny sitting-room.

"Here mother, this is my friend!" exclaimed Bertie, meeting Mr. Ronayne at the door and pulling him into the room. "I say," he continued to his new acquaintance, regardless of his mother's horror-struck looks at his audacity, "tes's ready; you'll stay and have some?"

"To be sure I will if Mrs. Palairat will permit me," said Ronayne, who felt a strong interest in the daughter of his old friend, and wished to see more of her.

"I'm sure, sir, I feel honoured, but I've nothing fit to put before a gentleman like you," the widow stammered, awkwardly.

"You can give Mr. Ronayne a cup of tea, mother," Alida said, quietly.

"Yes, and I'll give him some of my bread-and-dripping," chimed in Bertie, magnani-

moously, transferring a hunch of the delicacy in question to another plate, and placing it before his guest, who eyed the, to him, unaccustomed fare with a comical look of perplexity in his frank, grey eyes.

Alida came to the rescue.

"Everyone is not so fond of bread-and-dripping as you are, dear," she said, returning it to his plate. "I daresay we can find some better for Mr. Ronayne."

"Dripping ain't bad," remarked the incorrigible youth with his mouth full; he sometimes forgot his grammar, in spite of the pains Alida took with his education, "it's a deal better nor dry bread."

"I knew your husband very well some years ago, Mrs. Palairat," Ronayne remarked, as he sipped his tea and ate the thin bread-and-butter that Alida had cut out for him, and which had elicited from Bertie the remark—

"My, ain't it thin! What a lot of butter it takes."

The widow cast an uneasy glance at her step-daughter at this remark of their visitor, but said nothing.

"Yes, mother," Alida said, answering her glance with a reassuring look. "Mr. Ronayne knew papa years ago; he carried me on his shoulder when I was two years old."

"Then he didn't—" Mrs. Palairat commenced, but stopped abruptly.

"He did not see him for years before he died," Alida went on calmly.

"No, I quite lost sight of him years ago," Mr. Ronayne said. "I was unaware that he had married again, though I heard something of his having lost his property."

"Ah! yes," the widow said, with a sigh, "that was before he met me."

"But now I trust," the visitor went on, "that you will permit me to take up my old standing as friend of the family."

"You are very kind, sir," she said somewhat awkwardly, "but—but—"

"Please do not say anything against it," he exclaimed; "here is Bertie willing and anxious to be my friend; surely his mother and sisters will not deny me the same privilege?"

"We cannot, sir, after what you have done for him," his mother said, in an agitated voice.

"Nay, that I would have done for anyone," he returned, quickly, "but as it brings me your friendship I shall always feel grateful to the accident for what it brought me. Bertie," he continued, in a different tone, "what shall I bring you the next time I come to see you?"

"Lollipops," responded that young gentleman tersely.

"Then lollipops it shall be," Mr. Ronayne said. "Good-bye, Mrs. Palairat; I hope you will not think me intrusive if I come again. Good-bye Gracie," to the shy girl, who hid behind her elder sister. "Good-bye, Miss Palairat; I suppose I must not call you Alida now," and he went rapidly down the rickety stairs, followed by a shout from Bertie of—

"Come soon, and mind you don't forget the sweeties!"

When the last echoes of his footsteps died away, mother and daughter faced each other with an anxious look.

"He does not know," says Alida, very gravely; "ought we to tell him?"

"No, no!" said the widow shuddering, "he may be a true friend to us, and who is to tell him? He may never know."

"But if he should?"

"Ah! well," responded her stepmother mournfully. "We must trust that Providence will not be so cruel to the widow and the fatherless."

CHAPTER II.

AFTER that first meeting Percival Ronayne was a constant visitor at the Palairats' humble abode.

Boxes of chocolate and caramels for Bertie and Grace, lovely flowers and superb hothouse fruit for the widow and Alida, arrived in such profusion as to call forth a remonstrance from Mrs. Palairet against such costly extravagance. She had all her life been subject to the pinchings of poverty, and this wealth of floral magnificence was a revelation to her; she had never tasted the luxuries that riches can bring. It was very different with Alida. The lovely gardenias, stephanotis, tuberoses, and fairy-like maidenhair seemed like old friends to her, they reminded her of her lost home, where the greenhouses had been filled with them and their companions. She revelled in their beauty and the exquisite fragrance of their scent, but at the same time their familiar loveliness brought an unbidden pang to her heart; ended for her were all the beauties of life, only the sordid commonplace remained. Almost unconsciously she could not help wishing that she could return to her former state of luxury and ease, and be done for ever with the carking cares of poverty.

Not for herself only did she wish this, but also for her stepmother and her children.

Gradually she came to look eagerly forward to Percival Ronayne's visits.

He bought her books as well as flowers; he seemed to link her with her old life before poverty and disgrace had laid their fell hands upon her. More eagerly even than Bertie—who was a perfect cormorant for everything in the shape of fruit and sweets—did she watch for the sound of his familiar footstep on the rickety stairs, and long indeed the day seemed when she caught no glimpse of his erect figure and frank, good-looking face.

All unknowingly as yet her heart had gone out into the keeping of this brave, chivalrous gentleman, whose years numbered twice the amount of hers, whose thick, brown hair was slightly sprinkled with grey, but whose smile was as sweet, whose manner was as tender as a woman's, to anything young, and weak, and helpless.

And Percival Ronayne? As the summer days passed, he knew that love had come to him too; henceforth for him there would be but one woman in the world—his old friend's daughter, Alida Palairet.

He quickly made up his mind—he would ask her to be his own wife.

He had no kith or kin near enough to interfere with him; he was his own master and exceedingly well off, and what mattered it that Alida was poor. Her birth was as good as his own.

He was proud, the race of Ronayne had ever been so—proud of the bravery and honour of its men, of the stainless purity of its women. He would not have cared to stoop to a *mésalliance*; but Alida, though living in poverty, was descended on both sides from those of gentle blood. He would woo and win her for his own if he could.

His only hesitation was on the score of his age.

He was forty, she barely twenty. Could a young girl like her feel any real affection for a man so much her senior? he asked himself over and over again doubtfully, but he could not but remark the flush that overspread her pale cheek, and the glad light that flashed into her eyes whenever they met.

Emboldened by these signs in his favour, he determined "to put it to the touch, to win or lose it all," though in the latter case he knew he would have to give up the friendship which was so perilously sweet to him, and go back to the solitary existence which had sufficed him before, but which could never give him the same content since he had set eyes on Alida Palairet.

Tremulously she listened as the burning words fell from the lips of the man who was her hero, her sun-god, and a wild wave of rapture swept over her to know herself beloved.

She did not speak, her happiness was too great for words; she lay passive in his clasp as he drew her nearer and nearer, reading

in her silence, in her downcast eyes and rose-flushed cheeks, the answer he so longed to hear.

"My own!" he whispered, in impassioned accents, as he raised her face tenderly from his breast, "look up; let me read in your eyes that you return my love!"

Shyly she obeyed him, lifting her dark orbs to his with a love-light in them, which satisfied even his exacting passion.

"Darling!" he exclaimed, incoherently, "darling, you shall never regret your choice, never regret having blessed me with your love. Your life shall be fair—fair as I can make it; you shall never repent giving yourself to an old man like me."

"Old?" she echoed, softly, smoothing back the hair where it was silvered on his temples with tender, caressing touch. "Old? Why malign yourself so?"

"I am double your age, my darling!"

"What of that? You are young to all the world, especially so to me."

"And you can love me, staid and middle-aged as I am?" he queried, eagerly, gazing at her with his soul in his eyes.

"I should love you, Percy"—how tenderly she dwelt for the first time upon his name!—"I should love you were you double your present age."

He gathered her still closer in his arms, and kissed her upturned face and brow. "Darling, you will give yourself to me soon? I cannot live without my wife," she cried.

"I am yours now and ever," she murmured, low.

"I will take you to the country," he continued, fondly. "Away from all this squalid poverty, my darling shall reign as a queen in my ancestral house, one of the fairest chateaux that ever graced it."

His words recalled her to herself from her dream of bliss. "My—my stepmother," she faltered. "I had forgotten I cannot leave her and the children here."

"Nor did I mean that you should do so, Alida," he said, quickly. "Though your stepmother is very different from the graceful aristocratic woman who called you daughter, still she is your father's widow, and has been kind to you. In marrying you I do not wish to separate you entirely from her, do not think me such a beast as that," smiling tenderly at her. "There is a pretty little cottage only a mile or two from my place, which I thought would just suit her and Bertie and Grace; it will be much better for the children to live among the green fields than in the smoke of London. Besides, there is a first-rate school, near to which Bertie can go, and when you wish you can have them to stay with you at Ronayne Court."

"How good you are to me and mine, Percy!" she said, feelingly, looking with admiration into the bronzed face which wore so gentle an expression as it gazed at her.

"Pshaw, my darling," he said, laughing. "I cannot do half enough to repay you for giving yourself to me."

In the glamour of her love, Alida forgot everything save the bliss of knowing she was loved; but when Percy had at last torn himself away, and the spell cast by his presence had faded, suddenly there flashed across her with blighting force the remembrance of the disgrace that hung round her father's memory.

"Mother?" she cried suddenly to Mrs. Palairet—and there was a bitter tone in her cry as she knelt beside her stepmother's chair—"mother, am I wronging him in thus letting him marry me unknown? Would he still love me, still wish me for his bride if he knew all?"

"I—I think so, dear," said her stepmother, soothingly. "You are very pretty, Alida, and he loves you so well." She had her own reasons for not wishing the match broken off; the thought of the pretty cottage was very alluring to her.

"Yes, mother; but loving me so well, I ought not to deceive him."

"How can you tell him, Alida Mr

Palairet said sadly, adding quickly, "besides, he may never know the disgrace does not attach to your name."

"No; that is true," Alida replied, thoughtfully; "besides, it seems a pity to disturb his belief in his old friend, but I do not like deceit. Mother, tell me what I ought to do?"

Mrs. Palairet hesitated; though she had not descended from a long line of ancestors, yet she knew what honour meant. At last she said, "I cannot advise you, Alida; do what your heart and conscience thinks best."

"Then I will tell him, mother," Alida returned.

The widow sighed; the vision of the cottage and green fields faded away in the distance, for she thought Percival Ronayne's love would not stand the test, but she would not dissuade her stepdaughter from her decision.

But it was one thing for Alida to make up her mind to confess all to her lover, quite another to put it into execution.

Many times was she on the point of telling him everything, when something stayed her. Perhaps it was from a chance remark of his, or perhaps from her own inward dislike of the task, and fear of what the revelation might cost her; but certain it is that she put it off from day to day as it grew harder and harder, and finally something occurred which seemed to put it totally out of her power to say the fatal words, which would separate them.

Percival had insisted upon taking them all down to Ronayne Court to spend the day.

The massive structure, standing in a lovely park with herds of red deer, looked what it was, one of England's stately homes, magnificent and imposing to the eyes which had looked for so long upon narrow streets and rows of chimney-stacks.

Mrs. Palairet gazed with an awed look at the grand home which was soon to be her stepdaughter's; Bertie and Grace viewed it with different feelings.

They were wild with delight at the deer, at the huge gold-fish in the ornamental ponds, at the gorgeous peacocks strutting about the lawn with discordant cries, at the brilliant flowers, and last, but not least, at the splendid rows of fruit-trees in the orchard and kitchen-garden, where they were let loose by their indulgent host with permission to eat as much as they chose, provided they did not make themselves ill, a permission they were not slow to avail themselves of.

After a luncheon, which made Mrs. Palairet's eyes open wider than ever with wonder, and made Bertie regret that he had eaten quite so much fruit and left so little room for the good things provided, Percival drew his promised bride away to show her over the house where she would so soon reign as mistress.

All day Alida had been trying to gain courage to tell him her secret, but somehow the words would not come.

He had shown her the principal rooms, and asked her what changes she would like made in them—the armoury, with its grim suits of armour, from the Saracen's coat of mail, brought from the Holy Land by one of his ancestors who had accompanied the lion-hearted king to Palestine, down through all the different epochs of armour, Henry VIII., Elizabethan, Cromwellian, James, to some breast-plates which had been worn on the field of Waterloo. All bore the same testimony to the bravery of the race whose motto, "Death before Dishonour," had been upheld through centuries by men who were prouder of being Ronaynes of Ronayne Court than if they had a dozen titles tacked before their name.

He had shown her all these, and now they were standing in the picture-gallery looking at the portraits of graceful cavaliers and fair dames. Slowly they went from one to another, he telling her the history of each.

She stopped before one, a cavalier in the armour of the time of the unfortunate Charles I., and regarded the pictured face intently.

"Who is that?" she asked, softly. "You resemble him so much."

"You flatter me, darling," he answered, smiling. "That is Roland Ronayne, one of the heroes of our race; he preferred 'Death before Dishonour.' Shall I tell you, darling?"

"Yes," almost inaudibly.

"He was married; there you may see his wife, that beautiful woman with the raven locks. Very little more than a year after marriage war broke out, just, too, when a son and heir had been given him. Duty called him to the bloody field of battle; love and inclination would have kept him by the side of his beautiful wife, yet weak and delicate, but love was cast aside for duty. To her tears and entreaties that he would not go to the wars he answered, in the memorable words:—

'Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind,
That from the memorie
Of thy chaste breast and quiet minde,
To warre and arms I flie.
True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field,
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.
Yet this inconstancy is such
As you, too, shall adore;
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.'

In his eyes it would have been dishonour to stay at home."

"And he left her?" she asked, in a low voice.

"Yes, my darling; left her young, beautiful, beloved, never to see her more; exchanged the caresses of her white arms for the din, and clash, and carnage of battle, where he won honour and renown, it is true, but also won a grave."

"How horrible!" said Alida, with a shudder. "How could he leave her, and at such a time, too? He could not have loved her."

"Nay, dear one," Percival answered, with slight reproach in his tone, "he loved her passionately, but he would not sully that love by dishonour."

"Percival!" she cried, suddenly, and there was a ring in her voice he could not understand, "would anything change your love for me; any—any dishonour?"

"Why ask such a question, love?" he returned, calmly. "Poverty is no disgrace, and what dishonour could affect the daughter of my old and honourable friend?"

Alida shivered at this mention of her father, as though an icy blast had swept over her.

"But would it, Percival?" she repeated.

"Would you leave me if dishonour touched me as he, your ancestor, left her at the call of honour?"

"Thank Heaven, darling!" he said, trying to speak lightly, though he was impressed by her manner, "I shall not be tried as Ronald Ronayne was tried. There are no wars now to take me from your side."

"But, Percival," she insisted, with strange persistence, "is your honour dearer to you than I am?"

He looked at her gravely, searchingly, for a moment, then he answered,—

"I love you, darling, more than any woman upon earth, more than riches, more than life itself, but to your last question let me answer, in the words of my ancestor,—

'I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.'

A sob, that was almost a cry of despair, rose in her throat at his answer.

"What is it, Alida?" he cried, in a tone of alarm, "and what do you mean by these questions?"

"Nothing, Percival," she said, in her ordinary voice; "it was only my fancy. Nothing can come between us. Nothing shall," she added, to herself.

"Nothing, sweetheart, till death parts us," he returned, as they sauntered back to find Mrs. Palairt and the children.

She was feverishly gay the whole of the rest of the day; but at night, when she was alone in her small bed-chamber, a storm of passionate sobs shook her slight frame.

"I cannot tell him now!" she cried, in despair; "he would leave me for ever, and I should die. Oh! Heaven, forgive me! I hope it is not a very wicked act, but I cannot give him up; I will not give him up; I love him so, more than he loves me, for I would not put honour before love, and yet—and yet how grand he looked as he told me that he would hold the honour of his race even before me! I love him the better for it. Oh! if he should ever know he will despise me, but there is no one to tell him, and I shall be safe."

Although she came to this somewhat comforting persuasion Alida's pillow was wet with tears, and she never closed her eyes the whole night through.

CHAPTER III.

FIVE years had passed since Percival Ronayne married the woman of his choice—five years of such unalloyed happiness as is seldom vouchsafed to mortals.

The years had but added to and matured Alida's beauty. An adored wife, a happy mother, she seldom had time to think of the skeleton buried away in a cupboard—so fast secured, in fact, that it seemed as though it would never see the light of day.

The fear of its discovery, which had haunted the first months of her married life, had almost entirely passed away from her mind. She expanded and glowed under the warmth of the love lavished upon her, till her beauty became quite remarkable.

Percival Ronayne himself looked five years younger instead of older. His step was firmer, his bearing more erect, his face handsomer than ever. Not a single added line of silver was to be seen in his dark hair for the passage of these five years. He could not doubt the strength of his wife's love for him, and when an heir was born to his ancient name his happiness appeared complete.

It would be hard to say which idolised most the lovely boy that had been given to them, the mother who so fondly watched over him, and saw new baby graces unfolding every day, or the father who imagined he could trace in his infantile features those of the woman he loved so well.

Mrs. Palairt and Bertie and Grace were happy, too, in the rose-embowered cottage with the neat maid-servant that Percival had provided for them.

Grace was almost a young lady, and Bertie had grown into a fine lad, and both were very fond of their curly-haired little nephew. Bertie, indeed, would have taken the little four-year-old on sundry bird-nesting expeditions, only the mother's fears would not allow her darling out of her sight.

The little Morton—Percival had named his son after his old friend—was seldom separated from his mother. Instead of delegating such duties to the nurse, Alida herself took him for walks and rambles in the woods which surrounded Ronayne Court. She pointed out to his infantile eyes the beauties of bird, and leaf, and blossom, deeming that Nature was one of the best teachers of youth.

Sometimes Grace and Bertie would accompany her, sometimes Percival, in these rambles in the woodland glades, but often she and her beautiful darling would go alone, he asking innumerable questions in his childish prattle, which she strove her best to answer, though sometimes the riddles he propounded, in all good faith, thinking that his mother must know everything, were worthy of the Sphinx, and would have puzzled an Oedipus to answer correctly.

So the days passed on in an unbroken stream of bliss, till one afternoon something occurred which brought back all her dread of Percival discovering her secret. As usual she had been wandering about with her child

gathering the wild flowers and ferns, and wreathing them into chaplets to crown him with, while he laughed in glee and clapped his rosy palms at his flower-decked reflection in a clear, still pool, till his pattering little feet grew tired, and he climbed up into her lap as she sat on the trunk of a fallen tree, and in a short space of time fell fast asleep.

A fair picture they made, the beautiful young mother and her cherub of a child flower-crowned, with his downy cheeks rose-flushed, and his dimpled fists curled round, with the background of waving grass and varied leaf.

It was a picture of holy, tender mother, love and innocence, a sight to gladden the heart of any right-minded man or woman.

It did gladden the eyes of one who beheld it, but hardly in a right-minded fashion.

Lurking behind the bushes, greedily, hungrily regarding mother and child with a darkling, evil glance was a man who had the appearance of a tramp. A sorry looking wretch he was, with his clothes hanging in tatters about him, a pinched, hungry look on his unshorn face, and with a shifty, leering glance in his bloodshot eyes.

After stealthily regarding Alida and her child for some moments, he drew quietly nearer.

"Lady," he whined, with the true professional twang, "give a poor chap summat to get a loaf. I ain't touched a mouthful to-day."

Alida looked up with a slight start on being thus addressed, but it was not an uncommon circumstance to come across tramps.

"I have no money out with me," she said, gently, "but if you go to Ronayne Court they will give you food there."

"An' who shall I say sent me?" whined the tramp, coming still closer, and peering into her face in an insolent fashion; albeit his words were lowly.

"Say Mrs. Ronayne sent you; they will not fail to give you food then," Alida replied, drawing back somewhat haughtily.

"Shall I not rather say Alida Clarke sent me?" hissed the tramp, in a triumphant tone.

Mrs. Ronayne's face paled to a ghastly hue. "Who, and what are you?" she stammered, rising to her feet, but carefully, so as not to wake the sleeping child.

"I'm not surprised at your asking that question," he returned, familiarly, "I'm a deal more changed than you are, though you are changed too. By George, I'd no idea you'd turn out such a splendid woman; you were pretty then when I made sheep's eyes at you, but you were pale and slight, now you're glorious. Prosperity and an easy mind seem to have agreed with you."

"Who are you?" repeated Alida, with a terrible fear at her heart.

"You don't know me?" in a jeering tone.

"No," falteringly.

"I don't wonder. I ain't much like the swell as laid is and an art at your feet, only to be spurned like a mangy dog," grinding out the last words savagely.

"You cannot be, oh! I will not believe it —"

"Bob Hackett, at your service, mum," with an ironical bow; "but it is. You see a convict establishment ain't as conducive to good looks as plenty of tin, a fine 'ouse an' a lovin' naban. He! he! how much longer will he be lovin'?"

"Oh! Heaven," broke from Alida's white lips, "but how—how?"

"Ow do I come 'ere? Simple enough. I'm out on a ticket-of-leave, I ain't runned away, you can't denounce me. You thought I was safe, but I'm 'ere, willin' an' ready to forget old scores, an' be your very good friend. 'Ow did I find you out? you say. Well, that wasn't such a simple matter as the other. I searched and searched, but all trace of Alida Clarke had vanished. I thought you'd gone clean out of my life somehow. I'd almost given up the opes of meeting you when one day

I see'd you a playing with that kid there, and somehow you're face seemed familiar; still I thought such a grand lady couldn't be my old flame, but I inquired who you were, an' I foun' out you were the lady of Ronayne Court, and 'ow your name were Alida, and then I knew you were the same, an' now I'm certain."

By this time Alida had collected her scattered faculties, and it was in a tolerably firm voice that she asked,—

"What do you intend to do?"

"That depends upon you," the tramp answered. "A fellow must live, an' if you come down with the rhino pretty 'andsome, why well an' good; if not—" and he paused, significantly.

"If not?" she queried, with a quaking heart.

"I shall be obliged to go to that stuck-up 'saban' of yours. He! he! I daresay e'll kick me out. I've learnt all about 'im an' is darned pride, but it'll be nuts to me to see is face when I tell 'im is precious wife that e thinks such a lot on is my old flame and the daughter of a—"

"Not that, for Heaven's sake," cried Alida, breathlessly, looking around with scared eyes, as though the winds would waft the horrible news to her husband, "anything but that."

"You know 'ow my silence is to be bought," grinned the ruffian, amused at the sight of her distress.

"I have no money out with me," she wailed, "No; but you 'ave your rings an' bracelets; you can give me some of those. You can easily say you lost 'em, an' then in a week's time you can bring me a 'undred pounds, and the same every three months, an' you'll hear no more about me."

"I have no choice," thought the unhappy girl, taking off her bracelets and giving them to the greedy wretch, who gloated over their beauty and value before thrusting them away in the front of his tattered shirt.

"Thanky, mum," he said, turning to move off, "these'll keep me for a week, then I'll come 'ere again, and mind you 'ave the 'undred pounds ready if you don't want that precious 'saban' of yours to know," and he shuffled off at a good rate with his booty, leaving Alida overwhelmed with despair. In a moment the skeleton had been dragged forth from its hiding-place, and all the quiet bliss of the last five years was swept away. Never more could she look into her husband's eyes fearlessly; her dreadful secret would weigh her down and make her feel like a criminal before him. How bitterly now she regretted not having told Percival all before she married him!

The past five years had shown her the depth and strength of his love; even now would he not still adore her even if he knew the truth? Ah! he might not visit her father's sin upon her head, but would he forgive her long silence, her concealment of the truth?

Her love whispered to her, "Yes, he will forgive everything; you know how noble he is, he will make allowances for you. Confess all even at the eleventh hour;" then fear would mutter, "No, remember his motto, 'Death before Dishonour,' he would never look at you again if he knew."

Alida was distracted by her doubts and fears; she knew not what to do. She loved her husband so dearly that the mere thought of parting from him caused her the deepest distress. No, come what would, she must try and keep the dishonourable secret from him still.

Then there was the hundred pounds. She had not nearly that amount, and her husband was so very liberal to her she did not like to ask him for it, but the day before she had promised to give it to Bob Hackett. Nervous by desperation, she managed to stammer out her request.

"You want sixty pounds, darling," he said; "for some of your numerous charities, I suppose? Well, I will draw you a cheque."

"Percival!" she cried, flinging her arms round his neck—her relief was so great that he

did not ask her what she wanted it for—"my own dear husband, how good you are to me, so much better than I deserve; but you believe I love you. You will always know that, whatever happens?"

"Of course I know it, little woman," he answered, tenderly, somewhat surprised at her hysterical manner. "You love me even as I love you; and, my darling, it is a pleasure to me to give you this money. Do you know that it is the first you have asked me for since we were married?"

Well did she know it, for he had supplied her most bountifully with everything he thought she could possibly wish for, and well, too, did she fear that it would by no means be the last.

The next day, after having changed the cheque for notes and gold, Alida made her way alone to the rendezvous, to little Morton's great disgust, for he was not accustomed to a refusal from his mother when he wished to accompany her.

Hackett was waiting, looking much more respectable as to attire, but with the same gaol-bird appearance on his face.

"Well," he commenced, as Alida came up to his lurking-place, "you ain't troubled yourself to 'urry, you ain't; I've been 'ere more nor arf a 'our. I'd a great mind to go up to the Court, I 'ad," with a leer on his villainous countenance.

Without taking any notice of his speech, though her heart palpitated with fear, Alida commenced counting out the hundred pounds, the ruffian watching her with glistening eyes.

"There," she said, in a voice she vainly tried to render firm, "count it yourself, and now for three months I shall be rid of your presence."

"Quite kerect, mum," Hackett said, with a grin. "You'll be quit o' my presence till this day three months, when I 'opes to pay you another visit, but meanwhile," as Alida turned away, springing after her and seizing her wrist, "I'll 'ave one kiss for the sake of old times," and he tried to put his threat into execution.

With a wild scream Alida wrenched herself from the ruffian's grasp and tried to fly, but in an instant he seized her again.

"Ha! ha! my beauty, you thought to escape, did you, not till I've taken toll of those ripe red lips; here—" Before he could finish his sentence a blow delivered with scientific precision stretched him half senseless on the turf, and Percival Ronayne caught his fainting wife in his arms.

"Look up, Alida, my own, you are safe," he said, tenderly, as he chafed her cold hands.

"Percival," she moaned, "let me die."

"My darling, this has upset you," he said, gently. "Let me take you to the house, and then I will give that villain into custody."

"Oh! no, no," she said, shuddering.

"Why not, Alida?" her husband asked, in the utmost astonishment.

"Aye, ask 'er; ask that fine wife o' your'n," said Hackett, jeeringly, painfully rising from the ground, with a scowl on his battered face; "mebbe she'll tell you a fine lie or two."

"Cease, scoundrel!" said Percival, fiercely; "I will have you in goal before many more hours are over your head!"

"Will you, indeed?" ironically. "Then I'll proclaim to all the world who and what your wife is."

Percival felt Alida shiver in his arms. He turned to Hackett.

"Tell the world what you like," he said, sternly, "there are no secrets between my wife and me."

"Well, I'm blowed!" exclaimed Hackett, taken off his guard by this calm declaration.

"You mean to tell me yer knows your wife's the daughter of a darned forger, who slit his weazen to escape from consequences? Wot did she bring me the 'undred for?"

Not a muscle of Percival's face betrayed what he felt at this astounding intelligence, but one glance at the drooping form of his wife told him it was the truth.

"She made a mistake, I own," he replied, quietly; "but she wished to spare me all association with one of your standing. Now, listen! I will give you one chance; remove out of this neighbourhood at once, and I will not give you into custody, but dare to molest my wife, or so much as mention her name, and that moment I hand you over to the authorities. Go!"

Hackett did not wait to be told twice; he slunk off, muttering between his teeth,—

"I'll be even with you yet, my fine gentleman, pokin' your nose in an' spoilin' my game in this fashion! I'll give it yer, darn yer, for stoppin' my income, an' for spoilin' my beauty! I'll be even with yer, or my name's not Bob Hackett!" shaking his fist in the direction of the two figures he had left.

"Percival, you know?" whispered Alida, in scarcely audible tones, not daring to raise her face, but feeling some slight comfort from the fact that her husband's tender clasp had not loosened from about her slender waist.

"I know nothing, dear," he answered, gravely. "Alida, were that man's words true?"

"Ye-es," she breathed, faintly. "Oh! Percival! do not hate me! I strove to tell you before we were married, but I feared to lose your love; I could not give you up! You remember that day when you told me about Ronald, and the honour of your race? I was trying to tell you then, but I could not—I could not! I should have died without your love, and I knew with your pride you would not marry the daughter of a forger and suicide."

"My poor darling!" Percival said, compassionately.

"You love me still? You will not send me away from you?" she cried, breathlessly, looking up into his face with a wild gleam of hope in her eyes.

"Where would my boasted honour be then?" he returned, gently. "Would it be honourable for me to send away my wife—the woman I swore at the altar to love and cherish all the days of my life—for a sin not her own? No, darling! you are mine, and mine you will remain, till death parts us! But I am sorry you never confided in me. Have I not proved my love? Was I so harsh that you should doubt me?"

"Percival! forgive me! forgive me!" she cried, in an anguish of remorse.

He stooped and kissed her.

"If it will make you any happier, Alida, know that I forgive you freely! How could I do anything else? It was your love for me made you afraid. But, darling, there is one thing I cannot understand. I never heard a word of this; surely my old friend's name would not have escaped me in so painful a matter?"

"He changed it," she answered, in a low voice. "You heard of John Clarke, who, when he was arrested on a charge of forgery, committed suicide by cutting his throat?"

Her husband answered in the affirmative.

"He was my father!" she continued, shamefacedly. "That man who was here just now, Robert Hackett—"

"Ha! he was mixed up in it, was he not? I remember the name," Percival said, knitting his brows.

"Yes," she replied. "Percival," solemnly, "I believe that man to have been my father's murderer, not actually, but morally! I have always suspected that he forged the cheque, of which crime my father was accused."

"What makes you think this, Alida?"

"Percival, I will tell you everything now; there shall be no more concealment between us. This man, who only knew my father under the name of Clarke, had a great influence over him; he used to come to our poor lodgings and—he fell in love with me! I was very young at the time, but I loathed his hateful attentions, and told him so pretty plainly. He swore to be revenged, and from that time my unfortunate father went from bad to worse till the end came. Hackett, for all his

cleverness, was taken, and sentenced to penal servitude. He is out on ticket-of-leave, and by chance saw me and recognised me, and, finding I was married, threatened to expose me."

"Yes, and a nice life he would have led you. Thank Heaven I happened to be near here when you screamed. My blood boils when I think of you in the power of that scoundrel. Darling, creatures like that are rapacious; he would have robbed you of everything as the price of his silence, and made your life a misery."

"Percival," she said, humbly, "I have misjudged you cruelly. My darling, you are nobler far than I, but if the devotion of my whole life can atone for my fault you shall have it."

"Ah! Alida, I never doubted your love. My dear one, this shall only draw us closer. We will begin life anew, with no cloud between us," and a sense of rest and peace stole over her, such as she had not felt in all her married life, as her head dropped on his shoulder, and his strong arms closed round her in a closer embrace.

CHAPTER IV.

IF ALIDA Ronayne had been happy in her married life before, when the weight of her secret had marred her enjoyment, she was doubly so now when nothing came between her and her husband, and she could rest assured that nothing would change his love for her.

Percival was tenderer, more lover-like than ever, but at times a grave shade would pass over his face when alone. Though careful not to let his wife see it, yet it had been an undoubted blow to his pride to learn that his father-in-law had wound up his descent in the social scale by committing the crime of forgery, and then, not caring to face consequences, had weakly and rashly taken his own life, leaving his second wife and his three children to the world's cold mercy.

It was a great blow to him, but there was some consolation in the thought that no one could identify the forger and suicide, John Clarke, with his wife's father and his own trusted old friend, Morton Palatret.

As he had fully forgiven his wife for her long silence, so he never alluded to it again; he only strove, by his tender care and pity, to make her forget that melancholy incident in her father's career.

At first Alida had been a little nervous, fearing that Bob Hackett might turn up again; but as the weeks rolled on and he did not appear, her fears gradually calmed away, and she once more roamed about the woodland glades with her rosy boy, though now she was generally accompanied by Percival, or Bertie and Grace.

She was intensely happy, dividing her love between husband and child. She hardly knew which she adored the most, the husband who had proved himself so true a lover, or the lovely boy whose dimpled arms twined round her neck in loving embrace, and whose baby lips lisped such magic endearments in her ear.

She could hardly bear him out of her sight. Sometimes Percival would jestingly declare that he was jealous of the small tyrant who engrossed so much of her time; but in his heart he knew that he never loved her so well as when she had his son in her arms.

One day Bertie begged permission to take his little nephew for a walk. Alida, who happened to be busy, gave him leave; telling him not to go far, and she would join them the moment she was at liberty.

Away scampered the big and the little boys, delighted with their liberty, chasing butterflies, searching for frogs and newts and horrible creeping things, which would have made their elders shudder to touch, but which the two boys handled with the greatest easy foid.

"Meddithim; look, unkie Bertie!" exclaimed

the small youth, who had been digging in the ground, holding up a fine fat earthworm, that wriggled and twisted about his rosy fingers, for Bertie's inspection.

"All right," shouted his uncle in reply; "come quick, baby, and I'll show you a partridge's nest that's got lots of eggs in it."

"Me'll tum," announced the small youth, jumping up in a hurry, and letting earthworm, frogs, and newts fall to the ground in his excitement at the prospect of discovering the new treasure, and tearing his clothes in his reckless endeavour to push through the bushes and keep up with Bertie's long stride.

Quite forgetful of his sister's injunctions not to leave the grounds of the house till she could join them, Bertie had passed the confines of the park in his search for doubtful treasures, and was now in the fields beyond.

"Come on, baby," he cried, without once looking round to see how the youngster was faring; "it isn't far, in the hedge over there. See," he continued, as he crept slowly up to it; "there goes the mother bird, now we shall be able to see the eggs," and he cautiously peered into where the nest was placed; "one, two, three; there are seven; I declare! Come, baby, only you mustn't touch, because Percy would be angry. Aren't they pretty?"

Receiving no answer, he looked round, and great was his consternation on perceiving no baby in sight.

Loudly he called, but nothing answered him.

Hastily he retraced his steps to where he had last seen Morton, but no child was there. The hole he had dug, and some of his scattered treasures showed how lately he had been there; but what could have become of him so suddenly, without sound or cry?

There was no water into which he could have fallen. Seriously frightened, Bertie ran hither and thither, calling him frantically, but without result; little Morton had disappeared as entirely as though he had never been.

After an hour's fruitless search, very reluctantly he was forced to turn his steps towards Ronayne Court. He dreaded above all things meeting his sister, and having to tell her of his carelessness, and how he had unaccountably lost sight of little Morton.

Alida's grief was terrible, when at last Bertie tearfully explained to her the disaster.

Without waiting to reproach him for having paid so little heed to her injunctions, she, after telling the servants and sending them out in different directions to search for the missing child, accompanied him to the spot where he had last sight of his little charge. But the shades of night fell without the slightest trace of the lost heir of Ronayne Court being found.

Percival rode over to the police office and engaged a couple of detectives, who looked very wise, and declared that the child must very shortly be recovered; but their efforts were crowned with no greater success than the others.

Alida was nearly wild with grief when the second day closed in without any tidings of her lost darling. Poor Bertie was in a dreadful state; for he felt himself in some measure the author of the catastrophe, and though neither his sister or brother-in-law reproached him in words, yet their grief-stricken faces were a silent reproach that was almost more than he could bear.

He constantly went over the places where he had been with the child, in the hopes that he might find some trace of him and be enabled to restore him to his distracted mother.

Wearily, footsore, and dispirited, he was returning from his fruitless search on the second evening after his loss, when a little ragged urchin ran up to him and put a letter in his hand.

"You're to giv that to the lady at enot," he said, pointing to Ronayne Court.

"Who is it from? what is it about?" demanded Bertie, breathlessly.

"I dunno," was the careless reply; "a gemman giv me a copper to give it to you, an

that's all I know about it," turning a somersault, and then darting away rapidly.

Bertie was half inclined to follow him, but seeing the letter was addressed to Alida, and thinking it might concern the missing child, instead of going after the ragamuffin as his inclination prompted him, he hastened up to the house, where he found his sister pale and red-eyed from weeping.

"This is for you," he said, laying it in her lap, and then retreating a little distance, while he watched her break the seal and read the missive.

"Is it anything about Morton?" he asked, timidly, as an exclamation broke from her lips.

"Yes—no! I—I cannot tell you!" she answered, hurriedly. "Where is Percy? Has he come home?"

"Yes, I saw him as I came in."

"Tell him to come to me quick, Bertie!"

"All right!" he exclaimed, jumping up, and banging to the door with unnecessary violence, in his eagerness to obey her behest.

"Percival!" she cried, hysterically, as he entered the room, with a very anxious expression on his face; "why did we never think of it before? Hackett has kidnapped our child for revenge! But read!" holding out the letter as she spoke. "He threatens me with vengeance if I dare reveal this to you, or to anyone; but never more will I have secrets from you, my husband!" and she sank into a chair, while a storm of passionate weeping shook her frame.

This is what Percival read,—

"What fools yer are yer never thou't o' Bob Hackett! But I tell yer, when that darned 'usban' o' yourn floored me, an' spoilt my little game, I swore to be even with 'im, an' I've kep' my oath!"

"I racked my brains as to 'ow I should do it, an' I settled on the kid as the best means. But, darn yer! I got no chance, yer kep' such a good look arter 'im, 'till the day that precious brother o' yourn took 'im out."

"When 'e ran arter the partridge's nest I clapt a shawl over the brat's 'ed, to prevent 'im squealin', and 'urried away with 'im afore yer could say 'Jack Robinson'."

"An' now I'll tell yer wot I mean to do. That there brat is worth a thousan' poun's to me; if yer stumps up that yer shall 'ave 'im back safe an' sound; if yer don't, or if yer tells that 'usban' o' yourn, or anyone else about this, yer shall never see 'im alive agin!"

"This ain't no threat, it's Gospel earnest I'm a desp'rite man, and you've done me out o' my lawful income. But that thousan' poun's I will 'ave, or prepare for the worst! Bring it yerself too! none o' yer capers an' bringin' the coppers down on me! I can see yer a comin', an' if yer's up to any o' those larks, yer'll only find a small cop's for yer pains! yer mark my words!"

"Now, 'ow to do it. Yer knows the witch's 'ut at the corner of the wood? I'll wait yer there to-morrow at twelve with the kid, an' if yer brings the rhino we'll exchange; but if yer dussent cum, I'll slit his weazen as sure as my name's Bob Hackett! Aot square, an' I'll aot square, try to dodge me an' yer done, an' so is the kid."

"Oh, Percival! my darling will be killed by that ruffian!" she wailed, in uncontrollable grief.

"No, Alida," he said, soothingly, "your boy shall be returned to you safe and sound."

"Percival! what are you going to do?" she cried through her sobs, half fearfully.

"I am going down to the witch's hut at once," he answered; "our darling shall not remain one moment longer than I can help in the power of that ruffian!"

"But!" she exclaimed, all her fears turning now in her husband's direction; "he will kill you too! I shall lose both my darlings!"

"Hush! Alida!" he said, gently; "Do not seek to stop me. I shall try bribery, anything to rescue our boy! Money is what he wants, and money he shall have! Think of poor little Morton's misery! perhaps exposed

to brutal treatment and blows from that man!"

"Yes, it is horrible! But let me go with you."

"No, not darling! you would only unnerve me! I must go alone. Once the child is safe in your arms I will set the officers of justice on his track. But he is a desperate man; I believe him to be quite capable of murdering our boy. I must act warily till he is beyond the reach of harm."

"At least!" exclaimed Alida, distracted by her fears for her husband and for her child; "at least, you will take your revolver with you?"

"If you wish it," he answered; "but I think money will be by far a more potent weapon in this case. Dear! compose yourself, and let none suspect where I have gone! The safety of our boy depends upon it!"

Alida tried to obey, but it was with a sinking heart she saw him leave on his perilous errand.

Taking all the money he had in the house, though it was very far short of the sum required by Hackett, and armed in accordance with his wife's desire, Percival mounted his horse, and rode swiftly away in the direction of the witch's hut.

This was a tumbledown place some four or five miles from Ronayne Court, in a rather dense wood.

It bore a bad name, and was shunned by all the country people, not one of whose number could be induced to put foot inside it, and who even gave the exterior a wide berth after dark.

Its last wretched inhabitant, who was currently reported to be a witch, and to have sold her soul to the devil, was found one day after having been missed for weeks hanging from a rafter in the ceiling, in a mummified condition, and it was supposed that the hanging was the work of the old gentleman himself, who had come for his bargain. It was because it was so shunned and isolated that Hackett had chosen it as a safe retreat.

When he drew near the spot Percival dismounted and tied his horse to a tree, then walked noiselessly to the blackened hut to reconnoitre.

It was all dark and eerie, no scrap of light shone from the crevices. A stillness like the stillness of the grave reigned around. Ronayne began to think he might have been deceived, but on trying the door he found it was securely fastened on the inside. Judging from the circumstance that the man he sought was there he cautiously knocked, but there was no response. He knocked louder, but with the like result; then he tried what had once been the window of the miserable hut, but was now simply an aperture boarded over. Forcing one of the planks aside he called, in a subdued voice,—

"If anybody is in there he need not fear to show himself. I come about the ransom of the child, and I swear that I have no officers with me, only a portion of the money."

From the silence that followed this speech Percival thought that Hackett would not show himself, or that perhaps he did not intend to pass the night there, and had only mentioned the hut as a meeting-place where he could receive the money. He was debating as to what he should do when he fancied he heard a slight movement inside the hut.

"Hackett," he said, "if you are there I swear that you shall go unmolested if you deliver up the child. I have some of the money here."

"Hate you?" suddenly exclaimed a voice. "Then I may as well 'ave it at once. Take that for being such a fool as to come when I expressly told yer wife wat it would be if she sent anyone but 'erself."

A flash of light through the displaced plank, a report, and Ronayne staggered back, placing a hand to his side.

"Coward!" he exclaimed, bitterly, "to shoot a man unawares like that; but what

else could I expect? I was a fool to trust you."

"You were, indeed," grinned the ruffian, unbarring the door, and coming out with a lantern in his hand. "I thowt as 'ow it would be something like this. I knew that silly woman 'ud tell you, and that your love for that curly-wigged brat would fetch you. Well, yer see, I shall get wot money yer 'ave, and yer won't get the brat."

"Scoundrel!" said Ronayne, "I could shoot you where you stand, only—"

"Armed, are you?" quoth the ruffian, stepping back a pace. "I didn't know that, or I shouldn't 'ave shown myself so soon. Confound the bad light; I meant to kill yer, and I may do it yet. Oh! yer gettin yer barker out, are yer? I'll trouble yer for that," and with one bound he was upon the wounded man, who with difficulty kept himself erect, and wrenching the revolver from his grasp he hurled him to the earth. "Ha! ha!" he grinned, gazing down at the prostrate man with malicious satisfaction. "She loves you best, therefore you shall die. What care I for the brat? I tell you I love your wife, and she shall be mine. I shall take the brat back myself, perchance she'll look kindly on me then. I'll console your lovely widder, never fear; she's my old flame, you knows, and wimmen allus comes back to their first loves."

Ronayne struggled to his feet, and tried to spring upon the fiend who taunted him; but the effect was too much. He sank back upon the ground and fainted away.

"That's 'ow yer ought to be," Hackett said, coolly, as he rifled his victim's pockets. "Now to lock him up in the hut while I pays 'is lovely widder a visit."

Suiting the action to the word, he dragged the inanimate form into the hut.

"Wot about the kid?" he mused, as he was busy with his task; "shall I take 'im or leave 'im? Leave 'im 's best, I think; the drops 'll keep 'im quiet, an' 'is mother 'll stump up more if she don't see 'im."

Holding up the lantern, he threw its light upon a heap of rags in one corner, where, lying in a drugged sleep, was the baby heir of Ronayne, his downy, rosebud cheeks all dirty and blistered from the tears he had shed, until the opiate had made him oblivious of his woes.

"E's alright!" muttered Hackett. "I'll lock 'em both up safe till I can return."

He fastened the door and set out on his walk to Ronayne Court. It was past midnight when he arrived, and he skulked about till he was sure that all the servants had retired to rest.

In his former spyings upon Alida he had made himself acquainted with her habits, and knew that she spent a great many hours in her boudoir. Seeing that a light was still burning there he cautiously peered in, and saw, as he had expected, that she was there alone. He tapped softly at the window, for he did not wish to alarm her and rouse the servants.

Alida rose hastily, and unlatched the window; she thought it was her husband.

"Percival dear—" she commenced, then started back as Hackett seized her wrist.

"Not a word!" he hissed, "if you values your life or that of your kid!"

By an effort Alida conquered a strong desire to cry out.

"Where is my child?" she managed to articulate, calmly.

"Safe an' well, with 'is pa," he returned, with a leer.

"Thank Heaven!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands. "Then you have seen Percival—but why, why is he not here?"

"Wal, yer see, I thowt I'd come first, an' prepare you for 'is comin'. The fact is, he 'adn't quite money enough, and he up an' tells me to come to you. You're to bring the rest o' the money, or jewels, if you like, an' come with me to meet 'im an' the kid."

"You are telling me lies!" she said, all her suspicions roused by this unlikely tale. "Oh, Heaven! my husband—if you have harmed him—"

"Wot then?" he asked, savagely, as he marked her agony, and ground his teeth, to think how well she loved the man he had laid low. "Listen! You spurned me, but I've 'ad my revenge! Would you like to know 'ow I left your precious 'usban'?" forgetting all caution, in his jealous rage.

"How did you leave him?" she asked, steadily, though there was a ring in her voice that might have warned him, had he been less intent upon his revenge.

"Wal, I left 'im pretty quiet—'im an' the kid, too—in the 'ut. The kid squalled, so I giv 'im some drops to quiet 'im; but your 'usban' required sterner measures!"

"What did you do to him?" fixing her glittering eyes upon him.

"I left 'im with a ounce or two o' lead in 'is carcase, an'—"

He was interrupted by Alida. "Murderer!" she screamed; "you shall not escape!"

She seemed transformed by love and fury, and before he understood or could prevent her, she tore violently at the bell, and, seizing him with her delicate fingers, into which despair seemed to have infused the strength of a giant, she held him till help came.

"Let me go, or it'll be the worse for you," he snarled, making desperate efforts to escape from her clinging fingers; but with the tenacity of despair, she clung to him till the alarmed servants rushed into the room.

"This man has murdered your master—secure him!" she said, in piercing accents; and when this had been accomplished,— "Some of you come with me to this witch's hut," she continued.

Hardly could she wait while a carriage was got ready, so terrible were her fears and dread of the worst. Though the servants shared the common dread of the witch's hut, they all volunteered to go with their mistress.

Choosing some and leaving others to guard the prisoner, Alida set off to find what she feared and dreaded would be the body of her husband.

Arrived at the hut, no time was lost in breaking down the door. To her joy, she heard the childish voice of her boy, calling—"Mummy's tum; mummy's tum!" as the door gave way; and dirty, torn, and tear-stained as he was, he was convulsively strained to her breast.

"Pip's there," he said, presently; "he spoke to me in the dark, when I woke up, and was afraid; but, mummy, he's gone to bye-bye again."

Gently setting the child on his feet, Alida flew to her husband's side. The child's words had given her hope that he might still be alive. Leaning over him and kissing his pale face, she called upon him, in every endearing term, to look up and speak to her.

Her voice seemed to have power to bring back his wandering senses; his eyes opened, and he smiled up into her face.

"You here, darling!" he said, faintly. "The child is safe?"

"Yes, Percival; but, my dear one, you are hurt," anxiously bending over him.

"Not much, Alida," he said, reassuringly, trying to rise. "The villain's aim was bad in the dark; it was the loss of blood made me faint. I think with a little help I shall be able to walk home."

"The carriage is not far," she answered, placing an arm around him, while the butler supported him on the other side.

"What a brave little woman you are, Alida!" he said, when, with the rescued child, they were slowly on their homeward way. "You have saved my life."

"Ah, Percy," she said, tenderly, "I am so thankful you are not dead! From what Hackett said I thought he had murdered you; and I could not live without you."

"Darling!" he whispered, "I believe I am still first in your eyes? I shall never be jealous of this young tyrant again."

"You are my first; you will be my last love!" she cried, passionately. "I love the child be-

cause he is yours; but, oh! my husband, I love you best of all the world."

"I know it, Alida," he returned, stooping to kiss her. "But how did you know that I was wounded?"

"Hackett came, dear, and he is now secured; but here we are at home. I will tell you all another time. Now, I must get you to bed, and send for a doctor."

Percival made no opposition, for he still felt weak and faint. Much to Alida's satisfaction, the doctor reported that the wound, though severe, was not dangerous, that all he required was rest and quiet, and in a fortnight's time he was convalescent.

The child did not seem to have suffered much from his enforced absence from his mother. He was as gay and lively as ever; but Alida could not get over the fright she had had, and, in spite of Bertie's entreaties and promises to be wonderfully careful if he was allowed to have charge of his nephew, she could not be prevailed upon to let her treasure run the risk a second time.

Hackett was handed to the police, and was sentenced to penal servitude for life. Whether in a fit of remorse or not was not known, but he confessed that it was he who forged the cheque, of which crime Morton Palairt had been accused, and that it was in consequence of that accusation that the broken-down gentleman, whose brain was weakened by his misfortunes, had committed suicide.

"You were right, Alida," Percival said, when he heard the statement, "that man was morally the murderer of your father. He led him from bad to worse; but, in spite of his fall, my estimate of my old friend was pretty correct, for your unfortunate father, low as he had fallen in the social scale, and wrong as suicide must ever be, yet chose it rather than live dishonoured. Like the race of Ronayne he preferred 'Death before Dishonor!'"

[THE END.]

THE CHARM OF NEW ZEALAND.

NEW ZEALAND has the very extraordinary property of causing all who have once set foot on her shores to pass beneath the indescribable spell of her witchery.

I never met anyone who, having tasted life in his new island home, would consent to change his abode. Switzerland has loftier peaks and fairer towns; Tyrol may boast prettier outlines; Scotland has her classic heather and her brown hillsides; Norway, historic memories that linger in her winding fiords; but having gazed at and fancied myself in love with each of these sirens in turn, I am ever drawn back to my ideal beauty, New Zealand.

Nature does not often play the prodigal; to New Zealand she has given all her charms, and keeps them fresh and imperiously beautiful as Cleopatra's.

In no other country has she set down towering mountains beside profound fiords, and backed the scene by dense forests sloping down on the other side of the range into fertile pastures.

In no other spot does she find so deft a tiring woman as in the climate of New Zealand, who loves to exhibit her mistress in an atmosphere of blue relieved by a carpet of brownish green.

I am quite aware that this collocation of colours ought to sound hideous and repulsive in the last degree, but I am certain that those who, like the author of "Erewhon," have lived in New Zealand till they have learned to catch the spirit of her scenery, will bear me out that the effect is passing beautiful.

Then, was there ever a land of streams so crystal pure, which challenge you to count every pebble that lies beneath their arrowy current? And is there not an unspeakable charm in finding one's self among a sea of snow or of cloud-capped peaks, many unnamed, and most untrod by man?

A DELIGHTFUL BLUNDER.

IT was a very jolly crowd which stood waiting at the Silverthorne station for the seven o'clock train, that frosty November morning.

One might have thought that seven was rather an early hour for so large and exceptionally gay a gathering—especially as only one of the party was to take the train, the remaining sixteen having assembled merely to "see her off."

But for a better-informed person's fact that that one was Ida Terrill would have been a sufficient explanation.

That young lady had come to Silverthorne on a visit to her aunt, four months previous; and Silverthorne society had given her the warmest welcome imaginable. There had been a furious run of parties and picnics all the summer. Silverthorne had never been so lively; for Miss Terrill had "taken" immensely, and society had exerted itself in her behalf.

The heroine of the occasion stood in the midst of the chattering throng, entirely bewitching in her snug brown ulster, tossing back laughing replies to the chorus of sallies aimed at her.

Charley Whitlock was pretending to cry into his pocket-handkerchief. George Becker, lolling across a seat with his hair rubbed up wildly, was simulating a fit of insanity brought about by Miss Terrill's departure.

The train came puffing up.

"You'll surely come back next summer?" cried all the girls together.

There was a confusion of kisses and hand-shaking, the masculine portion affecting violent indignation that they were excluded from the former.

Miss Terrill's uncle, who was to see her safely to the junction at Crosby, where she was to change carriages, hurried her into the train. And the flutter of a handkerchief from a window was all that was left to the group on the platform.

Charley Whitlock and Lizzie Cavins walked away together, of course. They had been engaged all the summer, and were to be married soon.

"Poor Arthur!" said the girl, looking after a tall form which had detached itself from the group and was taking a solitary course up the street.

"Yes—poor Gifford!" said her lover, compassionately. "What made her throw him over, anyhow? I've never had the rights of the case. But I suppose you know?"

"Yes; she told me all about it. She's the most conscientious girl in the world—Ida Terrill. She refused him simply because she wasn't quite sure she liked him well enough to marry him. She said she'd be doing him a wrong if she married him without being certain; so she rejected him."

Charley gave a musing whistle.

"She's rejected a mighty nice fellow," he declared.

"Yes; I told her so. I tried to make her change her mind, but she wouldn't. Do you know—I oughtn't to say it—but I've imagined two or three times that she *had* come to care for him a little? You see, the longer you know Arthur Gifford the better you like him, and it was two months ago that she refused him. Well, I don't know!" Lizzie concluded, dubiously.

Ida Terrill, meanwhile, was spinning toward Crosby. Her uncle had taken from the paper-boy a magazine for her and a newspaper for himself, and was already absorbed in the political aspect.

Ida turned the leaves of the pamphlet listlessly, closing it at last, and allowing her eyes to wander among her fellow-passengers—rather an uninteresting set, she concluded. Then she rested her elbow on the window-ledge and her pretty chin on her hand, and looked out somewhat absently.

"Had she made a mistake?" she thought. "Was she sorry she had refused him?"

No, surely not. How could she have accepted him when she had not cared for him? There were plenty of proofs that she had not cared for him.

According to the best authorities she should have turned red and pale by turns at his approach, and her heart should have substantially increased its palpitations; she should have been madly jealous at seeing him with anybody else; she should have thought of him by day and dreamed of him by night—if she had cared for him. But she had had none of these symptoms.

Of course, she reflected, as she sped by houses, and fences, and fields, she had appreciated him. She had known—as who did not?—that he was very pleasant, very gentlemanly, very entertaining. And his behaviour, after his rejection, had been nothing less than sublime. He had, as it were, ignored it, continuing to devote himself to her with the same genial willingness, and never again referring to the embarrassing topic.

She should miss him—she owned that. She should think of him in the mazes of the waltz—there was nobody at home who could dance quite so well; she should think of him on cool, bright mornings—he had driven her out so often on such days—and on warm afternoons, like those they had spent together in his row-boat, or on the leafy porch; she should certainly think of him on moonlight evenings—

Ida stopped herself half-angrily, and gave a determined attention to her book. Perhaps the words were obscured for a moment by a slight mist which had somehow risen in her soft eyes; but it was only for a moment.

It was nine when they drew up in Crosby.

"You'll take the next train back, won't you, Uncle Stephen?" said Ida, as they crossed the several intervening tracks to the waiting-room. "I've a good while to wait for my train, you know. You won't need to wait with me."

"Well, I don't know—I don't know," said Uncle Stephen, irresolutely. "No hurry."

He was a dreamy little man, with a scholarly face and big, near-sighted eyes. He was vague and unpractical to the last degree. To be sure, a person of his ample means could afford to be unpractical.

"I'll just see when your train leaves," said Uncle Stephen, presently, putting Ida into a seat and disappearing towards the ticket-window.

He came back hastily.

"It leaves in ten minutes," he announced. "I'll put you in it now."

"Ten minutes?" Ida repeated, following him wonderingly.

According to the time-table which she had studied before starting, she should have waited an hour-and-a-half for her train.

She mentioned the fact to her uncle.

"Oh, it's all right," he assured her, easily. "It's the train for Chilton. I inquired."

He found a seat for her, chatted until the warning whistle sounded, and bade her goodbye.

Ida leaned back and watched the slowly receding station rather wearily. She was not especially fond of travelling—certainly not of travelling alone. She wished the day were done with, and she were at home.

She was not sure that she did not wish she had never come. Of course, she had had a charming time. But that had made the coming away all the harder.

She had so hated to leave it all! She did not ask herself what, or whom it was that she most regretted leaving.

The inspector's demand for her ticket broke up these lugubrious reveries. He gave it a glance, and then said, with a solemnity befitting the occasion,—

"You're in the wrong train, miss. This ticket is for Wellington."

Ida returned his half-amused look with a gaze of dismayed bewilderment.

"What shall I do?" she said, faintly.

The inspector was young, and by no means proof against a perfect face and pleading grey

eyes. He leaned towards her sympathetically.

"Your train," he said, "won't leave Crosby till half-past ten. You can get out at the next station and take the ten o'clock express back there in time to catch it."

He passed on, with a reassuring nod.

Ida resigned herself, with a sigh.

How exactly like Uncle Stephen the blunder had been! If she had been alone, she would never have made the mistake. She would have held fast to the time-table, and there would have been no such dreadful balk. She felt something of exasperation.

The guard assisted her from the carriage at the next station.

"You've only half-an-hour to wait," he said, encouragingly, having been told of her dilemma.

Half-an-hour—yes; but half-an-hour in a dreadful little station, with dusty benches, a splintery floor and grimy windows, was not so amusing.

Ida was the sole occupant of the small room. She could hardly have told, afterwards, how she passed the time.

She sat down in one of the uncomfortable seats and counted the boards in the floor; she scratched her name on the window with the small diamond in her ring—a proceeding which, under any other circumstances, she would have condemned as highly ill-bred; and she went out and paced up and down the little platform.

A house just visible down the road reminded her faintly of Uncle Stephen's, and her thoughts roved back over the past summer, and naturally to Arthur Gifford.

After all, she mused, he was rather an odd person. Almost anybody else would have made another attempt, in spite of a first refusal. She could think of a dozen girls who had married the very persons they had at first rejected.

Not that she should have accepted Mr. Gifford in any case; but it was certainly queer—his never having tried again. Perhaps he had not wanted to. Yes, that was it; he had not cared to. Probably he had been glad, on second thoughts, that she had refused him. Undoubtedly.

The passengers in the train which stopped presently noted a soft pensiveness in the pretty young lady who entered.

A young husband whispered to his wife that she must have suffered the recent loss of a new and dear relative; but she responded that a brown dress, a hat in varying tints of yellow and saffron-coloured gloves, were hardly compatible with that theory.

Ida's depression remained a mystery.

Almost the first person she saw at the bustling Crosby junction was Uncle Stephen, walking aimlessly up and down. He stared at her vaguely, as she placed her hand on his arm, with a bewildered "Bless my soul!"

Ida explained the situation briefly, and—be it said to her credit—with perfect good-nature; but Uncle Stephen was overcome with remorse.

"What a blunder!" he ejaculated. "Bless me! how could I have made it?"

The idea flitted through his niece's head that he was precisely the person most likely to have made it, but she merely smiled.

"I mustn't miss my train now, at any rate," she said. "It must be very nearly time for it."

"Yes, yes!" rejoined Uncle Stephen. "Certainly. I'll see about it right away."

His near-sighted eyes, roving about the junction caught sight of an old gentleman from Silverthorne, a special friend of his.

"Well, there's Channing—haven't seen him for a week!" he ejaculated. "Just wait till I speak to him a moment," and he darted off.

Ida waited five minutes—ten. A train moved slowly out. Could it have been hers? Ida grew rather nervous. She knitted her brows, hesitated, and finally joined her uncle.

"Ah, your train, my dear!" said Uncle

Stephen, briskly, as he perceived her. "I'll see about it."

He started off with a business-like air, but he came back slowly.

"It's gone!" he announced, in a dazed way. "Went just this minute, they say. I don't see how it happened; I never made such a blunder before."

Ida gasped, and stood staring at her uncle in despairing helplessness. Then, pulling herself together, she turned to a railroad official standing near, who said, glancing at her ticket, in response to her agitated inquiry, that her next available train was due at one.

Two hours and a half! But there is no help for it.

She should not feel safe, however, till Uncle Stephen was well out of the way; she felt that he was quite capable of leading her into a third blunder. She interrupted his flood of speculations as to how the mistake could have occurred.

"You mustn't wait for me, you know," she said, with heroic sweetness; "and you'd better take your train now, so as to be sure of it. It's already made up."

She took his arm and fairly put him into the train; she saw him select a seat inside and open a paper, and knew that he had already arrived at a peaceful unconsciousness of her very existence. Then she went into the waiting-room and sat down.

Two hours and a half! She would not be at home till late in the evening, when they would have given up expecting her. What a dreadful day it had been!

She wondered that she was still alive; she wondered whether her hair would not have turned a little grey by the time she reached home—if she ever did. She leaned back and closed her eyes despairingly.

Somehow Arthur Gifford was still uppermost in her mind. She took up her reflections where she had left off before. Yes, of course that was the explanation—he had congratulated himself upon escaping her. If he hadn't, would he not have asked her again? To be sure he would! He had never cared for her—it was perfectly plain that he hadn't. It was probable that he had even disliked her. Well, she was glad she had refused him—she was thankful!

Nevertheless, she took out her handkerchief and wiped a certain moisture from her eyes. When she looked up, wearily, she gave a violent start, and her pretty, pensive face grew brightly red.

Arthur Gifford was standing some three feet away, and looking directly at her. He came forward immediately and sat down beside her.

Ida bit her lip. But the sight of his friendly face had the old effect of bringing a lump into her throat and tears to her eyes. She pressed her handkerchief to them hastily, and went and stood by a window. And Arthur Gifford followed.

"Oh, what is the matter?" he whispered, bending anxiously over her, quite forgetting the strange fact of her presence there in his tender distress.

"I don't know," said Ida, helplessly, looking up at him timidly through her tears.

That look was too much for the young man.

"I can't help it—I can't help it!" he burst out. "I want you! I can't live without you! There, I had made up my mind never to trouble you again—"

He looked down at her.

"Oh, you do care for me?" he cried, rather wildly. "Say it!"

"Yes, I do," said Ida, firmly.

For there was no longer a doubt in her mind on that point.

There was a little silence. The hand-clasp, which in the publicity of the place was all that could be exchanged, seemed woefully inadequate.

"You haven't asked me how I come to be here," said the girl, perhaps to cover the joyful thumping of her heart; and she related her misfortunes eloquently.

"I ought to sympathise," said her lover. "I ought to be politely sorry; but I'm not. I consider it a direct interposition of Providence—your getting left, and my happening down here on business. For think what has come of it, dear!"

The two hours and a half passed away with remarkable quickness, after all. When Ida said good-bye to her lover from the carriage-window she could hardly believe that it had really been so long.

She pondered over the phenomenon for several minutes, when she was fairly on her way; but she forgot it presently in happy speculations as to how they would take the news at home (but, of course it would be all right when once they had seen him) and what the girls at Silverthorne would say when they knew she was coming back there for good.

S. G. R.

BURIED ALIVE.

THE exiles who live in the mines of Russian Siberia are convicts of the worst type and political offenders of the best, to quote the words of Stepniak, the distinguished Russian revolutionist.

The murderer for his villainy, the intelligent and honest Polish rebel for his patriotism, are deemed equally worthy of the punishment of slow death. They never see the light of day, but work and sleep all the year round in the depths of the earth, extracting silver or quicksilver under the eyes of taskmasters who have orders not to spare them.

Iron gates guarded by sentries close the lodes or streets at the bottom of the shaft, and the miners are railed from one another in gangs of twenty. They sleep within rock-hewn recesses—very kennels—into which they must creep on all-fours.

Prince Lumbomiroski, who was authorised to visit one of the mines of the Ural at a time when it was not suspected that he would publish an account of his explorations in France, has given an appalling account of what he saw.

Convicts racked with the joint pains which quicksilver produces, men whose hair and eyebrows had dropped off, and who were gaunt as skeletons, were kept to hard labour under the lash.

They have only two holidays a year—Christmas and Easter—and all other days, Sundays included, they must toil until exhausted nature robs them of their limbs, when they are hauled up to die in the infirmary.

Five years in the quicksilver pits are enough to turn a man of thirty into an apparent sexagenarian, but some have been known to struggle on for ten years.

No man who has ever served in the mines is ever allowed to return home. The most he can obtain in the way of grace is leave to come up and work in the roadways, and it is the promise of this favour as a reward for industry which operates even more than the lash to maintain discipline.

Women are employed in the mines as sitters, and get no better treatment than the men.

Polish ladies by the dozen have been sent down to rot and die, while the St. Petersburg journals were declaring that they were living as free colonists; and more recently ladies connected with Nihilist conspiracies have been consigned to the mines in pursuance of a sentence of hard labour.

It must always be understood that a sentence of Siberian hard labour means death.

MIGRATORY BIRDS.—It is reported from North and Central Sweden that this year migratory birds have left in large numbers at an unusually early date. Between August 16 and 18 there were thousands of wild fowl seen passing over Stockholm, their progress lasting for several hours at a time. A severe winter is anticipated in the north of Europe. The autumn has been very cold in Norway.

FACETIÆ.

Glove clerks are counter-fitters.

The leader of the German—old Bismarck.

The locks on the door are worn perfectly plain. It is the door that is banged.

"Too much by 'm-by," was the expressive way in which a Chinaman informed a watchmaker that his watch gained time too fast.

"Women," quoth Jones, "are the salad of life, At once a boon and a blessing."

"In one way they're salad, indeed," replied Brown;

"They take so much time in their dressing."

Jack: "I say, Peters, can't you pay me that five shillings you owe me now?" Peters (the omnibus conductor): "Don't be unreasonable, man! The bus has just started. Wait till we get to the other end."

A NATURALIST, who has just returned from Spain, says that the natives keep locusts in cages "for the sake of their music." We suspect it would be a little more expensive to hire a boy to file a saw all day, but the "music" would be more edifying.

PRETTY TEACHER: "Now, Johnny Wells, can you tell me what is meant by a miracle?" Johnny: "Yes, teacher; mother says if you don't marry the new parson it will be a miracle." Teacher: "You may sit down."

"Why don't you hold your head up as I do?" asked an aristocratic lawyer of a sterling old farmer. "Squire," said the farmer, "look at that field of grain. You see that all the valuable heads are bowed down, while those that have nothing in them stand upright."

A FARMER once called his cow "Zephyr." She seemed such an amiable hephyr.

When the farmer drew near,
She kicked off his ear,
And now the old farmer's much dephyr.

"Good-by, love!" said an affectionate wife to her husband, who was leaving her for a long journey. "You'll not forget me?" "Never, darling!" he replied. And he tied a knot in his handkerchief so that he shouldn't.

FINE GARCON: "My eldest son was born with two teeth. Second Ditto (not to be outdone): Mine had slight indications of a beard. Third (triumphantly): My daughter was born ready vaccinated."

LISTON'S sole occupation at last was sitting all day long at the window of his residence in St. George's-row, Hyde Park Corner, with his watch in his hand, timing the omnibuses, and expressing the greatest distress and displeasure when one of them appeared to him to be late.

MRS. HENDRICKS (calling on Mrs. Colonel Towser): "I noticed your husband at the head of his regiment in the parade yesterday, Mrs. Towser. What a stern and commanding presence he has!" Mrs. Towser: "Very" (to the colonel just entering the door): "Did you buy the meat for dinner, Towser?" Colonel Towser: "Ah—er. By Jove! my dear, I—er—" Mrs. Towser: "You needn't 'ah' and 'er' about it. You forgot that meat, and you can just tramp back and get it." (To Mrs. Hendricks: "Excuse me, Mrs. Hendricks, but you were saying—")

"I say, Bobby," whispered Featherly, "was your sister pleased to learn that I had called upon her?" "Yes, indeed she was," replied Bobby. "When mother told her that Mr. Featherly had called while she was out she said, 'Thank heavens.'"

PROOF OF LOVE.—First Masher: "You think that she loves you, then?" Second Masher: "I'm—aw—positive of it, my dear boy." First Masher: "What makes you positive?" Second Masher: "She has named her poodle after me; my dear boy, and if that isn't a strong proof of a young lady's affections, then I'm no judge of the dear owcachahs, that's all."

"MY HUSBAND is so poetic," said one lady to another. "Have you tried rubbin' his joints with hartshorn liniment, mum?" interrupted a woman with a market-basket at her feet, who was sitting at her elbow and overheard the remark. "That will straighten him out as quick as anything I know of if he hain't got it too bad."

A PLEASANT COMPLIMENT.—Minister's Wife (looking over the paper): "You are referred to in this morning's paper, my dear, as 'a distinguished clergyman.'" Minister: "H'm. I thought that my sermon yesterday would attract attention. Is it published in full or only a synopsis given?" Wife: "Neither. You are spoken of as 'a distinguished clergyman' in connection with that patent medicine testimonial you sent to Dr. Quack."

SHOES AND STOCKINGS FOR HIGH EASTERLY WINDS.—Fashionable Daughter (preparing to go out): "What are the weather-probabilities for to-day, mamma?" Mamma (looking over the paper): "High easterly winds with local rains." Fashionable Daughter (to maid): "Jane you may get out my striped silk stockings and kid shoes."

THE DOMESTIC STORM SIGNAL WAS UP.—"Pa," said little Eddie McDonald, early this morning, "the storm signal is up." "Is it, my son?" "Oh, yes. Ma says she found a toothpick in the front door lock this morning and your shoes on the top of the sideboard, and she says it's going to be a cold day." Mr. McDonald went to the office without waiting for breakfast.

THE SCHEME THAT DIDN'T WORK.—She wanted to break her husband of the habit of drink and began to cook his food in liquor, having heard that it would prove effectual. He didn't say anything the first day; he showed no signs of noticing the change the second day; but after supper on the third day he said to her: "Maria, you don't know how you've improved your cooking in the last three days."

THE KIND OF AN EVASIVE ANSWER SHE GAVE HER.—Mrs. Whistler (who had just seen Mrs. Wiggins go down the steps in a sensational manner): "What in the world did you tell her, Kate?" Kate: "You told me to give her an evasive answer, ma'am, about yer being at home, so I just hit her in the eye and slammed the door in her face."

TESTIMONY FOR THE DEFENCE.—Not long since a young lawyer was appointed to defend a man for burglary. The young lawyer, after consulting his unfortunate client, said, "May it please your Honour, I want this case remanded until I can obtain the attendance of material witnesses." "What do you expect to prove?" asked the court. "I expect to prove that my unfortunate client is a quiet, industrious and sober man." "By whom do you expect to prove that?" "The officers of the prison, where he has spent the last five years."

MELTING A TRAMP'S HEART.

He had stopped at a cosy-looking cottage and rung the door-bell, and asked the servant who answered for something to eat. She stated that she would summon her mistress. The latter soon appeared, and found the tramp grazing on the narrow border of grass which lined the flower-beds of the front yard.

"Why, what are you doing?" she asked. "I'm hungry, mum, for I ain't had nothin' to eat for three days."

"But do you eat grass?" "Yes'm, when I ain't got nothin' else." "Poor fellow, you must be hungry. Can I help you?"

"Yes'm, you could, if you'd give me something to eat. The grass is mighty short down there."

"I will help him," remarked the sympathetic little wife to the servant, as each wiped a tear from her eyes, and continuing said, "Jane, take the poor fellow in the back yard—the grass is so much taller there."

In some parts of Africa it is the custom for a woman to knock out her front teeth as soon as she is married. In some parts of this country the husband does the knocking out.

PRISONER (desirous of flattering the Court): "I think there is a fine expression in your Honour's face." Judge (urbanely): "So there is, and the fine is ten shillings and costs."

VERY CONSIDERATE.—The custom of kissing babies, says Blifkins, is being justly censured these days. It is cowardly to kiss the poor little helpless things. I'd rather take somebody of our own size."

GRANDPA: "Tell me, Ethel, why do you have six buttons on your gloves?" Ethel: "Yes, grandpa dear, I will tell you. The reason is, if I had seven buttons, or five, they would not match the six button-holes."

TIT FOR TAT.—A few days ago two men were in Smith's barber-shop. One had red hair, and the other was bald-headed. Red hair to Bald head: "You were not about when they were giving out hair?" Bald head: "Yes, I was there; but they only had a little red hair left, and I wouldn't take that."

ILL-LOOK.—Some people are born to ill-luck. An old lady who has pasted nearly five thousand medical recipes into a book during the past forty years has never been ill a day in her life, and she is growing discouraged.

MRS. SCHMIDT.—"Yes, I'm in the lecture business," said the long-haired passenger, "and I'm making money, too. Big money. I've got a scheme, I have, and it works to a charm. Big houses wherever I go." "A scheme?" "Yes. I always advertise that my lectures are specially for women under thirty years of age, and for men who are out of debt. You just ought to see the way the people come trooping in."

"O no!" exclaimed a suburban passenger to his milkman; "got a box of chalk under your arm, haven't you? Bought it in the city and taking it out to the dairy, eh? Now will you be kind enough to tell me what you are going to do with it?" "Certainly, sir, certainly," replied the milkman. "Your wife tells my driver to chalk it down so often that he is out of crayons, and I'm laying in a new supply. If you'll come out to the farm I'll show you your statement of account on the side of the cow barn."

WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

"Where are you going to, my pretty maid?" "I'm going to the lecture, sir," she said. "May I come with you, my pretty maid?" "You won't understand it, sir," she said. "What is the subject, my pretty maid?" "The final extinction of man," she said. "Then you won't marry, my pretty maid?" "Superior girls never marry," she said.

A REMARKABLE MEMORY.

"And you pretend to say," remarked a lawyer to a witness, "that you remember the exact words this man said to you ten years ago?"

"I do." "Well, if my memory serves me, I met you at Brighton about five years ago, and I should like to know if you can swear to any expression which I then made?"

"I can." "Now, Mr. J., I want you to remember that you are under oath—now, under oath, you swear that you can quote with great accuracy a remark I made to you at Brighton five years ago?"

"I can." "Well, what was it?" "You met me in the hotel porch?" "Yes, quite correct." "And you shook hands with me?" "Naturally I did." "And you said to me, 'Let's go and have a smile.'"

The crier of the court had to call silence for ten minutes, and the lawyer confessed that the witness had a remarkable memory.

SOCIETY.

THE Prince of Wales has contributed £25 to the fund now being raised to carry out the national memorial of Lord Shaftesbury. The amount is to be applied to the erection of convalescent homes for poor children, institutions that will bear Lord Shaftesbury's name.

THE Duchess of Albany drove from Windsor to Hampton Court to join Princess Frederica in the ceremony of opening the new premises of the institution at East Molesey, known as the Princess Frederica's Home, established for the reception of poor women in London immediately after their confinement, when change of air and rest are so great a boon. A short religious service was said by the Bishop of Bedford, and the Royal ladies, after going through the rooms, pronounced the home open.

The Count and Countess Gleichen, by permission of the Queen, have resumed the name and title of Serene Highnesses Prince and Princess Victor of Hohenlohe-Langenburg. Their children will retain their present title of Counts and Countesses Gleichen.

THE Mace of the House of Commons and the chains of the various office-bearers are in the hands of the Court Jeweller, who is regilding them. It is customary when a fresh Speaker is appointed to give the clerks new wigs; conditional provision of the kind likewise is being made.

A MARRIAGE has been arranged between Sir Richard Sutton, Bart., and Beatrice, fourth daughter of Sir Vincent Corbet, Bart. Miss Judith Corbet, fifth daughter of Sir V. and Lady Corbet, is the fiancée of the Rev. B. Heber Percy.

THE Crown Prince ("Our Fritz"), at the charity bazaar held recently, under the special protectorate of the Crown Princess, in the Berlin City Hall, and which was a decided financial success, personally disposed of sanasages (knaakwürste) at twenty and even fifty marks apiece, likewise of thin slices of sponge cake at five marks.

LADY MAGDALEN YORKE on her wedding-day looked charming in a dress of the richest white satin, trimmed with marabout; a wreath of orange blossoms, tulle veil, but no ornaments. The six bridesmaids were similarly attired in white satin, bordered with marabout, white plush hats, with marabout feathers and ospreys; each wore a diamond and pearl brooch, the gift of the bridegroom, Sir R. H. Williams-Bulkeley. The bride's costume de voyage was composed of violet velvet and chinchilla.

THE marriage of Mr. Ralph Sneyd, of Keole Hall, Staffordshire, and Miss Mary Ellis, eldest daughter of Colonel Arthur Ellis, C.S.I., Esquerry to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, at St. Peter's Chapel, Vere-street, Cavendish-square, was a splendid affair. A great many relatives and personal friends, besides several members of the Royal family, were present at the ceremony. The altars and adjacent parts were decorated with white flowers and foliage on the occasion.

The bridesmaids, all children, wore dresses of crimson cashmere with moiré sashes, and plush hats to match, and carried gold baskets filled with white flowers.

Her Royal Highness Princess Louise (Marchioness of Lorne) and the Marquis of Lorne arrived shortly before four o'clock. Soon afterwards their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh arrived, and the congregation was most distinguished.

The bride was attired in a dress of white moiré, and over a wreath of orange blossoms wore a large tulle veil. The service was fully choral. Before the blessing the choir sang the hymn, "Thine for ever, God of Love."

STATISTICS.

OPIMUM.—The amount of crude opium produced in India in 1882 is stated in recently published statistics to have been 8,071,120 pounds. The number of acres of land used in its culture is given at 876,454.

THE JEWISH POPULATION OF THE WORLD.—The Bulletin of the Geographical Society of Marseilles estimates the total number of Jews in the world at 6,377,692—that is, 5,407,602 in Europe, 245,000 in Asia, 413,000 in Africa, 300,000 in America, and 12,000 in Oceania. The European Jews are distributed as follows: 1,643,708 in Austria-Hungary, 561,613 in Germany, 60,000 in Great Britain, 3,000 in Belgium, 3,046 in Denmark, 1,900 in Spain, 70,000 in France, 2,652 in Greece, 7,373 in Switzerland, 8,693 in Holland, 36,289 in Italy, 600 in Luxemburg, 200 in Portugal, 260,000 in Roumania, 2,552,145 in Russia, 3,492 in Servia, 3,000 in Sweden and Norway, 116,000 in European Turkey. There are about 150,000 in the Asiatic provinces of Turkey, 15,000 in Persia, 47,000 in Asiatic Russia, in India and China 19,000, and 14,000 in Turkestan and Afghanistan. In Africa, there are about 35,000 in Algeria, 100,000 in Morocco, 55,000 in Tunis, 6,000 in Tripoli, 200,000 in Abyssinia, 8,000 in Egypt, 8,000 scattered over the desert, and about 1,000 at the Cape of Good Hope.

GEMS.

POVERTY of soul is worse than that of fortune.

EVERY day should be distinguished by at least one particular act of love.

THERE is no escaping our destiny, as each day brings us in contact with it.

IT is a very popular saying that we should put off to-day what we ought to have done yesterday.

THE little I have seen of the world teaches me to look upon the errors of others in sorrow, not in anger.

THE time for reasoning is before we approach near enough to the forbidden fruit to look and admire it.

THE best of us are hampered in every effort of improvement, not alone by our faults, but by those of our neighbours.

TALENTS of the highest order, and such as are calculated to command universal admiration, may exist apart from wisdom.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PORK PIE.—Make one-half pound of puff paste, made in the usual way, only instead of one-half pound of butter to one-half pound of flour, six ounces of butter to one-half pound of flour would be sufficient. Take from two and one-half to three pounds of the thick end of a loin of pork, with very little fat on it; cut into rather thin slices three inches long by two inches wide; put a layer at the bottom of a pie dish. Now wash and cut finely a handful of parsley, also an onion. Sprinkle a small portion of these over the pork, and grate a little nutmeg over, and a little pepper and salt. Now add another layer of pork, and over that some more of the seasoning, only be sparing of the nutmeg. Continue this until the dish is full. Now pour into the dish a cupful of stock or water and a spoonful or two of mushroom catsup, or a few mushrooms would be better. Put a little paste round the edge of the dish; put on the cover, brush a little egg over the paste, and if there be any trimmings of the paste left, roll it and stamp out some leaves with a tin cutter, and ornament the pie in a tasteful manner; egg over the leaves, and put the pie in a rather hot oven. When the paste has risen and begins to take colour, put the pie at the bottom of the oven, with some paper over it, as the pie will require to be in the oven two hours.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE SECRET.—It is not great wealth or high station which makes a man happy. Many of the most wretched beings on earth have both; but it is a radiant, sunny spirit, which knows how to bear little trials and enjoy little comforts, and which thus extracts happiness from every incident of life.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TELEPHONE.—English experiments in telephoning between a light-ship and the land have proved remarkably successful. The vessel selected was anchored ten miles from shore in sixty feet of water. For eight months messages of all sorts have been sent and received in all weathers, with but a single interruption from a break in the cable. Passing vessels have been signalled and reported; orders transmitted from owners to their ships approaching or leaving port; the state of wind and tide communicated to waiting mariners, and timely notice given of the occurrence and location of wrecks.

CLEAN HANDS.—It seems that, from a scientific point of view, perfectly clean hands are an impossibility. In the *Gazzetta Medica Italiana* Dr. Forster says that after the most diligent washings and brushings with soap and water and rinsing with carbolic acids and other disinfectants the hands remained so impure that upon touching the fingers to sterilised gelatine, micro-organisms were rapidly developed. The doctor found, indeed, that on rinsing the hands with a solution of one to one thousand of corrosive sublimate they became "scientifically cleansed" for the time, but that in wiping them upon a towel not previously disinfected they return to their sad condition of uncleanness.

RESERVE OF POWER.—We know well what is implied by a reserve fund of money or of time over the actual needs of our daily life, how it can be applied to a hundred objects of comfort and pleasure to our families, or of welfare to the community. But it rarely occurs to us that the same thing applies in even a more effective and permanent manner to our vital powers. To have a surplus of strength is at once to have many opportunities put into our hands; and he who, by a systematic self-care, maintains this surplus is in just that proportion prepared to be helpful and valuable to society.

SELF-NEGLECT.—He who neglects himself is to that extent weak. If he exhausts his energies they diminish. If he strains them still more by continued endeavour they grow yet feebler. Discouragement follows, difficulties surround him, and he has no adequate strength to cope with them; still less has he any reserve of power for active enjoyment, or to promote the happiness of others. Perhaps he began by a sense of obligation to others and a willingness to sacrifice much for their sakes; but he has mistaken the road, and has involved those for whom he toiled in his own misery.

THE TEST OF MAN'S CHARACTER.—The sharpest test of a man's character is in his treatment of what is in his power and wholly below him. Motives of self-interest are sufficiently strong and numerous to produce irreproachable conduct towards superiors or equals in strength or knowledge. They have it in their power to defend themselves from our attacks, to bring us to account for our misdoings, to resist injuries. Much of what renders our lives valuable is in their hands to bestow or withhold. When, therefore, we so order our conduct as to conciliate and please those who can thus control our happiness and welfare it may be a token of intelligence, but not of noble character. When, however, we come into relations with those who have no such power, who must accept without appeal what we choose to give them, who have no more substantial reward to bestow than gratitude or affection, and no severer penalty than secret and impotent wrath, we show something of our true selves by the way in which we treat them.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JON D.—Very lucky indeed.

G. R.—Write to your brother at the address given by him. It is the only chance you have of reaching him.

ROSE.—Your mother can give you the best counsel. Apply to her. You are both too young to be thinking of boys and love and marriage.

LENA.—Young ladies should not indulge in sentimental correspondence until they are engaged to be married.

G. G. H.—You have acted very properly. You had better tell your betrothed all about the matter. He may hear of it from others and think you are guilty of coquetry.

ALFRED W.—It is neither proper nor polite to make any remarks calculated to cause pain or discomfort to a friend or acquaintance. Such remarks as the above are not pleasant to all persons.

S. B. L.—1. She seems favourably disposed towards you, but you will have to work your way. 2. Fair writing, but is capable of improvement, as is your spelling.

F. F. G.—A kettle-drum is simply a large tea party. Tea is the special beverage, sometimes it is "spiced" or "flavoured" with a stronger admixture. Drum is a word expressive of a crowd, the reference being to the drums in which figs are packed. Rout means a concourse of people. This definition, however, is now obsolete.

F. O. N.—Keep on in the course you have adopted. It is not likely that your parents will compel you to marry the old gentleman against your will. You can very well afford to wait till you become twenty-one years old, and by that time your favourite lover may become rich enough to satisfy your parents on that score.

C. C. K.—Do not set your heart on any young gentleman until you are sure that you are really beloved and sought in marriage. Girls have to be careful, as they cannot propose no matter how deeply they may fall in love. Be nice and agreeable to all your friends.

W. H. R.—You have no good reason to believe that the young man ever entertained anything but kindly feelings towards you, and any forwardness on your part would be more likely to repress such feelings than to stimulate them. You will probably meet your friend at some entertainment this winter, and you will have an opportunity then to give him your invitation to call, and to talk over all the misunderstandings which have arisen between you.

F. F. H.—Think less of your beauty and more of accomplishments and usefulness. Your mother can give you excellent advice and assistance. Such extravagant compliments as you have quoted are pure flattery not worth a moment's thought. Strive to render yourself pleasant, cheerful and useful. A girl with such qualities is certain to attract good men's attention and love. Do not be in a hurry to marry or anxious to secure company.

B. F. W.—You had better postpone the marriage until the young gentleman comes of age. He is too young to enter into a marriage engagement, and your engagement with him had better be considered conditional and not binding upon either party for at least two years. You may lose all opportunity of becoming settled in life through this unreasonable engagement.

G. R.—This is a matter which you must decide for yourself. We do not know which is the finer man or which one is the most acceptable to you. Kissing is a privilege which should be very highly held, not to be granted until a gentleman has proved his sincerity and loyalty. It is a mark of high favour, therefore a young lady should be very discreet and careful in granting it. To accept valuable presents is also a mark of high favour and in a measure binds you. If you accept them you must favour the giver. You write very well.

T. H. S.—You are quite right in refusing to stoop to the petty deceit of turning off the gas when your employer enters the shop; but you make a mistake in not showing him the courtesy which is due from one member of society to another, in saying, "Thank you," even for what you are fully entitled to. If you lose your present place, make up your mind to be scrupulously polite and pleasant to everyone in your next place, but to be willing to lose it also sooner than do anything deceitful, or even "small."

S. B. H.—1. Ostriches have small wings, because, having long legs, they do not require their wings for flight. They are merely used to steady their bodies while running. 2. The speed of African ostriches has been estimated as high as thirty miles an hour. 3. The males are usually glossy black, with the exception of the loose feathers of the wings and tails, which are white. These white feathers are the ones used by ladies for hair plumes. The females are brownish-grey. 4. The white feathers are secured with soap and bleached; the black ones are white ones dyed with log-wood and copperas. 5. Ostrich feathers are much sought after because they consist chiefly of a soft down, which flying birds do not possess. 6. The American ostrich, found in South America, differs somewhat from the real ostrich, though its general shape is much like it. It is only about half as large, has no tail feathers, and has three toes, while the African ostrich has only two. Their feathers are used chiefly for making feather brushes.

F. G. B.—The refraction of the sun's rays by the falling rain causes the rainbow. Sometimes rainbows are made by the sun's rays falling upon the spray rising from waterfalls.

R. N. R.—1. Is it to some optical illusion that you have reference? 2. Putty is a cement used by glaziers to fasten panes of glass into window frames, and for other purposes. It is made of whiting and linseed oil. The whiting is dried, pounded, and sifted, and stirred into the oil. When it is stiff enough it is worked by hand, or with a hammer, on a board until it is smooth. The word putty is in French *poté*.

JANE.—A stereotype, or a stereotype plate, is made by setting movable types as for ordinary printing; from these a cast is taken in plaster of Paris, and upon this cast melted type-metal is poured, which, when hardened, makes a solid page or column, from which the impression is taken upon paper by means of a press.

E. D. B.—The solar system is made up of the sun and of eight bodies called planets, which turn round the sun at different distances from it. The one nearest to the sun is Mercury, and after it come in order Venus, the earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. All of these, with the exception of the earth, are named after the gods of ancient Rome.

AMINA.—Comets usually come from outside the solar system, pass round the sun, and then go back again. They are either composed wholly or in part of nebulous matter. They are numerous, but most of them are too small to be seen with the naked eye. Those which we do see have bright heads and remarkable tail-like appendages, but there is not a great deal known about them. We cannot enlighten you.

WINTER TIME.

Dull-grey skies now bend above us,
Dry leaves rustle on the ground,
Winds sigh through the leafless branches,
Winds that have a mournful sound:
Birth of autumn! death of summer!
Coming thus, within one day—
Thus, to leave her throne for autumn,
Doth the summer pass away.

White soft sunshines lingers softly
Over autumn's gorgeous throne,
Loth to leave the few bright flowers
'Neath the autumn winds alone,
Zephyrs sigh o'er dying summer
With a piteous wail and moan;
Birds and bees still linger
Where the summer sun has shone.

Leaves, with tints so bright and gorgeous,
Shew triumphant autumn's path.
Drooping summer lends to autumn
All the brightness that she hath.
Fields of golden grain, for harvest,
Bow their heads to this new queen,
As she passes through her kingdom,
Clad in robes of brightest sheen.

But gay autumn's crown will wither,
And her royal garments fade,
Stung by icy breath of winter.
Low her gorgeous splendour laid,
With the threat'ning clouds above her,
Soon will lovely autumn die;
And, with ice and snow, King Winter
Autumn's throne will occupy.

A. P.

G. F. G.—Marble cake consists of two batters—a light and a dark one. The ingredients of the first comprise 1 cup of white sugar, 1 cup each of butter and milk, the whites of 3 eggs and a cup of flour. The dark consists of 1 cup each of brown sugar, treacle and nutmeg, 1 cup each of butter and milk, 1 teaspoonful each of allspice and soda, 2 cups of flour and the yolks of 3 eggs. Butter the mould and put in the dark and light batter in alternate tablespoonfuls.

K. E. L.—1. The little white spots on the finger-nails are due to some subtile action of the blood. They sometimes disappear of themselves; but there is no known cure, and in reality they signify nothing. 2. Glycerine is an excellent remedy for chapped hands, lips, &c. Be sure to use the finest quality, as the adulterated article will irritate. 3. She must be a very pretty specimen of the feminine gender. 4. The only legitimate way of becoming acquainted with the gentleman would be through the kindness of a mutual friend. Otherwise, we are constrained to think the lady's love will have to remain locked up in her breast and wither away for want of attention. 5. We have never seen an explanation of the curious physiological and psychological fact that a girl's brother nearly always prefers the company of some other fellow's sister instead of that of his own.

LILLIE F.—1. We presume you refer to a golette, an Italian vessel. There is no material difference. A lugger is a small vessel, carrying three masts, with a running bowsprit and a long or lug sail. 2. A sloop of war is a vessel of war rigged either as a ship, brig, or schooner, and mounting between eighteen and thirty-two guns. A frigate is a kind of vessel originally used in the Mediterranean, and propelled both by sails and by oars; in modern naval usage it is a ship of war, of a size larger than a corvette or sloop of war, and less than a ship of the line. Usually it has batteries on two decks, viz., the spar deck and the one below it or main deck, on which is the principal force. It rates usually from twenty-eight guns up to forty-four.

W. S. W.—In the earth, as you are aware, there is no real axis; we can only imagine one for the earth to turn round on.

WINNIE should not permit this young gentleman to restrict your maidenly freedom. He is too selfish. Until a young lady is engaged she should treat all her friends of the opposite sex very much alike. We think that you will do very well to follow the advice of your mother in all such matters. You write very nicely.

DOUGLAS.—What is known as the "Gowrie Conspiracy" is one of the most singular events in the history of Scotland. It took place in August, 1600. John Ruthven, Earl of Gowrie, and others, entered into a plot to possess themselves of the person of James VI., the reigning king, to convey him to England, and to administer the government in the interest of the Presbyterian leaders at home. They succeeded in enticing the king to the Gowrie House, in Perth, and after they had held him as a prisoner were almost successful in dismissing his attendants without exciting suspicion; but the king, crying out for assistance, his voice was heard, and his followers instantly hastened to release him. During the struggle, which resulted successfully for James, the earl and his brother were killed, and three of the earl's retainers were executed.

F. H. H.—To successfully treat ingrowing toe-nails, begin the effort of cure by the simple application to the tender part of a small quantity of perchloride of iron, which is in a fluid form, though sometimes in powder. Immediately after the application there will be a moderate sensation of pain, or constriction, and burning. In a few minutes the tender surface will be felt to have dried up, and the pain will cease. The patient, who before could not put his or her foot to the floor, will find that he can walk upon it without annoyance, and by permitting the hardened, wood-like flesh to remain for two or three weeks, it can be easily removed by soaking the foot in warm water. In its place will be found a healthy structure. If thereafter the nails be no more cut round the corners or sides, but always curved in across the front end, they will in future grow only forward; and by wearing a shoe of reasonably good size and shape, all further trouble will be avoided.

LIEBIE.—1. The proper form of introduction is to present the gentleman to the lady, the younger to the older, the inferior to the superior. Thus you will say: "Miss Benton, allow me to present to you Mr. Reede." "Mrs. Warden, let me present to you my friend, Miss Wendell." "General Gillis, permit me to introduce to you Mr. Lawrence." The exact words used in introductions are immaterial, so that the proper order is preserved. Thus, in introducing two gentlemen, it is sufficient to say, "Mr. James, Mr. Perkins." If several persons are to be presented to one individual, mention the name of the latter first, and then call the others in succession, bowing slightly as each name is pronounced. 2. The looks of a very dark autumn hue, 3. Very neat. 4. An eighteen-year-old girl is not too young to marry, although such a step is not generally advisable at such an age.

ROSE R.—To finish walnut wood for varnishing proceed in this manner: Mix with good whiting such colours as will produce as near as possible the colour of the wood to be filled. This mixture is to be dry. Then give the wood a liberal coat of oil, and sprinkle the mixture over the work until it is pretty well covered; then with a rag or other soft substance rub this in well, finally wiping off all superfluous material. Let it dry thoroughly and varnish. The process of polishing this varnish is a tedious one, and in the case of amateurs, a difficult one. Put two ounces of powdered Tripoli into an earthenware pot or basin with sufficient water to cover it. Now, with a piece of fine flannel four times doubled, laid over a piece of cork-rubber, proceed to polish the varnish, always wetting it well with the Tripoli and water. In order to ascertain if the process is complete, wipe a part of the work with a sponge, and observe whether there is a fair and even gloss. Clean off with a bit of mutton suet and fine flour. Be careful not to rub the work too hard or longer than is necessary to make the face perfectly smooth and even. 2. The process of polishing veneering is even more delicate than the above, requiring a great deal of patience and experience. The rubbing must be done gently and the work constantly watched in order that a uniform gloss may be imparted to the wood. 3. No one but an experienced cabinet-maker should attempt to glue veneering on furniture of any description.

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